INTRODUCTION

Violence and Women

Over the span of human history, violence has displayed the remarkable characteristic of remaining consistent in its expression. South Africa for instance, with its fairly young democracy, has beginnings intertwined with a legacy of apartheid (Niehaus, 1998), colonial oppression and liberatory struggles (SATRC, 1998). Internationally too, wars, political conflicts and the experience of interpersonal violence allude to the persistence of violence in the history of human-kind (Dahlberg & Butchart, 2005; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002; Donson, 2008). Despite the seeming inevitability of violence, social and public health scientists argue that violence is preventable (van Niekerk & Duncan, 2002). Indeed this is viewed as a necessity in light of the social and health impact of violence. As indicated by Dahlberg and Butchart (2005), physical, sexual, and mental health problems are some of the consequences for those who are the victims of non-fatal violence. In light of the health-related problems inherent to violence, coupled with the economic costs involved (Krug et al., 2002), governmental departments are including violence prevention interventions as part of their core business (Watts, Cockcroft & Duncan, 2009).

A number of these interventions have been leveled at the examination of gender. This growing body of research has examined the role of constructions of masculinity in the perpetration of violence (Browne, 1993; White & Kowalski, 1998; Ratele, 2008; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989). Stevens (2009, in Watts, et al., 2009) to this end informs us that "research on gender differences in relation to violent crime has tended to suggest that female victimization … is directly related to ideological and structural processes that support male domination" (pg. 529). Rightfully so then, violence against women and children has received the preponderant intervention focus within the social and public health sciences with an acknowledgement that its expression is located within interpersonal relations (Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Mercy, Rosenberg, Powell, Broome & Roper, 1993).

Feminist psychologists and gender scholars and activists generally have accentuated on the unavoidable influence of gender stemming from ideologies like patriarchy, which make women and children vulnerable to men (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). They have suggested that in order to prevent violence experienced by women, an understanding of the contextual characteristics is essential. Early studies by feminists focused predominantly on patriarchy as an ideology affecting the lives of women (Crawford & Unger, 2000). More recent analyses

indicate an awareness, incorporation and even fusion of other variables to understanding and preventing the phenomenon (Crawford & Unger, 2000; Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006). The intersection of gender with race, for instance has complicated an already dense focus on violence. Regardless of the inclusion of other factors, feminist psychological theory is underpinned by its acceptance that patriarchal ideology influences society and positions women as subordinate to men.

Although intimate-partner violence and sexual coercion are the most common types of violence affecting women and girls, in many parts of the world violence takes on special characteristics according to cultural and historical conditions (Morena *et al*, 2005). Given this, it can be stated that an understanding of how cultural, religious and traditional norms, beliefs and outlooks are interpreted is imperative if one is to understand the manifestation of violence in these contexts and to formulate appropriate interventions.

Violence against women, then, represents a complex scenario in that it can be regarded as a product of the social context it finds expression within, influenced by ideologies supporting male domination. Norms, beliefs and traditions inherent to a social context are an imperative condition to the development of an understanding of such violence. In light of this, many researchers, academics and activists seek to locate violence against women within context. This has produced acknowledgement that violence against women may be culturally or religiously bound, in particular practices such as female genital mutilation and 'sati', (the burning of brides in India) (Roy, 1998). One form of violence affecting the lives of many women, expressed within cultural and religious boundaries, is witchcraft-related violence (Castle, 2005; Brauner, 1995).

Witchcraft-related violence

The belief in witchcraft has appeared in many parts of the world and has taken its toll, literally, in blood. Although one may think that witchcraft belief itself has declined (for, in the Western world, witchcraft accusations have ended) the reality in Africa, and South Africa in particular, is that witchcraft belief continues to influence the thinking and behaviour of many people (Parrinder, 1963; Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998). In these contexts, witchcraft accusations and the violence faced by those identified as witches continues to abound (Adinkrah, 2004; Leff, et al., 2008). Due to the deeply set belief in witchcraft that has penetrated every sphere of society in South Africa, from politics to sport, witchcraft belief is a prominent feature culminating in fear.

The issue of witchcraft-related violence seems to be one that gains momentum based on justifications within religio-cultural belief systems (Stark, 2003; Ally & Laher, 2006; Danielou, 1991). The justifications assigned to these beliefs have been responsible for wars, as well as gender-based violence (Stark, 2003). For, individuals seem to utilise such belief to support their violent behaviour as a necessity motivated by religion and/or culture.

The 17th century witchcraft violence in Europe, provided evidence that those accused of witchcraft were not only killed viciously by sometimes being burnt (Stark, 2003), but also faced extreme levels of torture and torment. As an example, Heinemann (2000) informs us that "the accused were stripped and tied up" and thumbscrews tightened, crushing their thumbs (pg. 13). Ashley (1986, p. 73) informs us that no restrictions existed to the torture those accused of witchcraft faced, seen in the images below and; "she could be ducked in the village pond, or 'swum' to see if she sank…she could be strapped to a wheel and beaten systematically with an iron rod, thumb-screwed, eye-gouged, scourged…".

The pictures above provide graphic evidence of the treatment given to those accused of witchcraft.

Assani (1996) supports this historical perspective by indicating that modern day witchcraft violence includes both fatal and non-fatal assaults. As stated by Adinkrah (2004), physical abandonment and abuse, material deprivation, financial neglect and isolation are some of the consequences of an accusation. As such, the 'witch' is not able to fend for her or himself and falls prey to homelessness, violence and isolation. Defamation of character was also a consequence of being accused. Bannerman-Richter (1982) in this respect informs us that the accused "loses her status and honor not only with the community, but more importantly, with her own relatives before whom she will stand disgraced for as long as she lives" (p. 113). The

trauma consequently experienced by these individuals within their family contexts can be described as severe.

Scholars have studied witchcraft for centuries across the world through various disciplines, providing explanations that focus on different elements of social life like politics, economics, historical conditions and psychological functioning (Ashforth, 2000; Parrinder, 1963; Levack, 1995; Heinemann, 2000; Ivey & Myers, 2008). Salmon (1989) for example indicates that historians have conceptualized 'witches' as beggars who were turned away by more prosperous community members. These prosperous individuals would accuse the beggar of witchcraft "to salve the conscience or justify the selfishness of those who refused charity" (Salmon, 1989, p.484). Rowlands and Warnier (1988, in Geschiere and Fisiy, 1994) extend the politico-economic debate and emphasise that sorcery lies at the centre of state-building processes. In a system where one political view is dominant, accusations of witchcraft serve as a mode of political action (Niehaus, 1993). Evans-Pritchard (1937) and Briggs (2002) have shown that witchcraft beliefs are linked to experiences of misfortune, rivalry and jealousy and that these beliefs can be regarded as an expression of conflict. This indicates that witchcraft beliefs play a role of a social buffer, which removes personal autonomy from misfortune and places this misfortune as stemming from within the social context. The above and other previous studies allowed me to set the parameters for this doctoral project.

MOTIVATION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In analysing studies on witchcraft, I was impressed by two factors whose links have been dominantly ignored. First, the lack of gender analysis in most of these works is glaring. Most writers agreed that the overwhelming majority of people accused and killed for witchcraft were women, but very few took this statistic into their interpretations (Barstow, 1994; Hester, 1992; Briggs, 2002; Heinemann, 2000). Bearing this in mind, we do not assume for once, that the gender dimension of witchcraft accusations may wholly explain the entirety of the witchcraft experience. But the exclusion of gender, given the stark reality that positions women as vulnerable to accusations must be a focus of research. The exclusion of gender becomes ever-more urgent in light of the violent consequences associated with witchcraft accusations. The violent consequences, the second factor motivating the current study is the use of torture and violence that can result in the deaths of most of the accused. My reflection of these two factors in relation to each other sets the parameters for the study. Mostly if women are accused of witchcraft, and if witchcraft accusations are accompanied at times by violence, torture and death, it follows that witchcraft accusations can be viewed as an expression of violence against women. In light of the gendered implications posed by witchcraft accusations, coupled with the violent acts faced by the accused, the need to focus on witchcraft-related violence with a gendered perspective was viewed as imperative.

The feminist voice has played a vital role in the understanding of women's experiences of violence (White, Bondurant & Donat, 2000). Essentially, feminist studies have suggested that the domination of men over women has been enforced by the threat and use of violence (Hester, 1992). Violence therefore, occurs within the context of power differentials and the resistance, enforcement or maintenance of power. Various authors note that power is a specific type of social relation, and that the exercise of power essentially involves control and often results in forms of domination in social relations (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Kamensky, 1996).

This study builds on these power differentials, noted as often resulting in forms of domination in social relations. By doing so, we will I will be able to accentuate on an expression of violence against women from within the parameters of gendered relations. The contribution of the present study is linked to its unique outlook and focus on witchcraft accusations as gendered violence which has not been effectively formulated in this manner in the countless books and articles reviewed on witchcraft despite the glaring gender element. I therefore locate witchcraft accusations as embedded within a gender social system, as with the broader experience of

violence against women, that functions on an ideology that supports the domination of men over women.

South African witchcraft violence has been studied and certain provinces have been identified as being more likely to experience witch-hunts. These provinces are, namely, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Limpopo and the former Venda area (Leff, et al. 2008). Although studies on these particular areas have shed light on understanding the phenomenon in South Africa, this doctoral project has not located itself within any particular region. The aim is to understand witchcraft accusations and the violence that follows using a feminist psychological framework. The understanding derived from this stance would enable the findings in this project to have wide applicability to understanding how expressions of violence, found within religious and cultural beliefs, may be utilised to further perpetuate the subordinate status of women in relation to men. This focus will allow us to comment on the influence of power stemming from patriarchy on expressions of violence against women. In light of the feminist psychological stance adopted in this project, witchcraft accusations are also therefore located within an interpersonal space marked by ideologies like religion, culture and patriarchy, influencing the position and treatment of women.

This doctoral project takes the form of *four papers*, which can stand on their own but are better seen as a whole, underpinned theoretically by a feminist psychological perspective. The feminist psychological perspective is repeated and applied in different ways in the four papers. This repetition was essential as it provided us with a lens to understand witchcraft accusations as an outcome of a particular gendered relation.

The *first paper* motivates for understanding witchcraft accusations using a feminist psychological framework. The theoretical position derived from feminist psychological literature on violence against women will be explored and utilized to examine witchcraft-related violence. Feminist psychological theory enables us to locate witchcraft-related violence as primarily an expression of gendered violence.

The *second paper* focuses on newspaper reports of witchcraft. Given the centrality and accessibility of newspapers to the general population, the reporting of witchcraft-related violence may provide insight to why, witchcraft violence as a gendered expression has not been effectively addressed.

The *third paper* looks at community members' perceptions of witchcraft. Acknowledging that witchcraft violence is carried out within a specific community, this understanding becomes imperative as the fear of witchcraft held within a community may be associated with a dominant view on women.

In that community, interviews with women accused of witchcraft, is the focus of the *fourth paper*, providing first-hand accounts of the consequences faced by accused women.

Essentially, this doctoral project employs feminist psychological theory to critically describe witchcraft accusations as a vehicle to view and position women in society. Using a feminist psychological perspective to critically describe the position of women in society is imperative as we argue that witchcraft-related violence represents an under-explored facet of gendered violence, steeped in a tradition of powered gender relations.

SPECIFIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This project aims to show that witchcraft accusations and the subsequent violence faced by the accused is a reflection of attempts to (re) establish a gendered relationship that positions women as submissive to men.

The objectives of the project are:

a. To apply feminist psychological theory to explain witchcraft accusations as an expression of gendered violence;

b. To demonstrate that witchcraft belief, accusations and the violent actions that often accompany such accusations influence the perception of women and are reflected in various levels of society.

These two objectives are explored through four chapters that locate witchcraft-related violence on different levels of influence, namely, society, community and individual.

METHODOLOGY

The philosophical debates regarding the merits of quantitative versus qualitative research are common-place and ongoing in the social sciences (Rizo, 1991, Mouton, 1990). These debates have manifested in somewhat of a truce between the proponents of these schools within the discipline of psychology. What is considered important is that certain methods may be more appropriate with answering particular questions and to aid with understanding and the creation of knowledge, based on the nature of what is being researched (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 1999).

In order to understand the meanings and experiences of witchcraft accusations and the subsequent violent consequences that follow, the qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative approaches to scientific inquiry enable a researcher "to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997, p. 741). Witchcraft accusations may be best explored using the qualitative approach as it enables a focus on the meanings that these phenomena have for the participants. Thus, by exploring the ideas, beliefs and attitudes expressed by the participants, the researcher hopes to identify emerging patterns that reflect participants' interpretations thereof. Moreover the researcher aims to apply feminist psychological framework, to uncover gendered discourses related to witchcraft accusations. With gendered discourses in mind, the researcher has adopted a (feminist) critical paradigm within the qualitative approach as he aims to elicit meanings beyond that presented by the raw data itself.

THE CRITICAL PARADIGM TO RESEARCH

Transcending the positivist and extending on the phenomenological paradigm, the critical paradigm within the social sciences has been influenced by the works of Marx and Engels (1967), Foucault (1966), neo-Marxists (McLellan, 1979) and The Frankfurt School (Habermas, 1987). The basic tenet of the critical paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. Even though not all critical scholars focus on the deconstruction of reality, within this paradigm knowledge of reality is socially constructed and can thus be deconstructed to reveal underlying social and historical mechanisms and antecedents (Burr, 1995; Collier, 1998). Thus, the deconstruction of reality functions as a means of emancipation from the various forms of

domination that may be experienced. The researcher, importantly, remains aware of the impact of his own positioning within the research context.

The foundation of feminist research has rooting in critical theory. Feminist research is therefore critical and emancipatory, and perceives reality, science and research within this context. Feminist research is based on the assumption that the world is socially constructed. Essentially feminist research focuses on the social conditions of women in a sexist and patriarchal society (Stanley and Wise, 1983). This type of research enlightens people about sexist practices and the gender-blindness of government and community practices that displaces, ignores and silences women. Ultimately, feminist research explores how sexist practices lead to an unequal and discriminating social order (Haig, 1997; Punch, 2000).

Feminist research then, embedded within a critical paradigm, is considered the appropriate lens from which to conduct research for the current study. With the objective of highlighting how witchcraft accusations reflect a particular gendered relation which is powered, the critical paradigm, provides the appropriate platform to analyse gender and to reveal social conditions that continue to construct witchcraft accusations as a gendered issue.

It is within this paradigm specifically, that language (and other forms of communication) is considered a medium through which discourses are conveyed, reproduced and contested. A discourse is an instant of language use that enables a group of people to communicate about a particular topic conveying both overt and covert messages. The subtle distinction between language and discourse is that discourses are embedded within and communicated through language (Terre Blanche, Durrhein & Painter, 1999).

Discourses then can be considered as themes found within texts that enable one to highlight contextual aspects, linked to historical, socio-cultural, political and other forms of dominance and control. The subject in a study from within this paradigm becomes the vehicle through which aspects of context are revealed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Thus, the critical paradigm differs from the idealist perspective which considers language as but a means to communicate independently, but rather adopts the view that through language gains and creates meaning through social thought (Neuman, 1994).

Methodologically, then, this paradigm includes the examination of textual data (archival, news reports, interview transcripts) and relies on a variety of analysis such as discourse analysis (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). With discourse defined as themes found within texts,

discourse analysis refers to a way of understanding social interactions as reflected through themes found within text or spoken language. Discourse analysis therefore, enables one to comment critically on various aspects of the context reflected within the text (Hodges, 2008; Neuman, 2004). It follows that this paradigm is utilized in studies that deconstruct contexts with uneven social relations, including the context of gender studies, race and colonialism, for example (Hodges, 2008).

The critical paradigm is therefore most applicable to this PhD project. With a focus on understanding powered gender relations, I am able to utilize the critical paradigm to critically understand how witchcraft accusations serve to (re)produce a particular gender relation. This paradigm enables me to critically comment on the construction of reality presented by the participants and how these notions feed expressions of violence, reflecting deeply entrenched ideologies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter motivated for a focus on witchcraft accusations and its associated violent consequences as an expression of gender relations which are dominated by men. Influenced by patriarchal ideals, the relationship between men and women is characteristically uneven and violence against women represents an attempt by men to maintain dominance. I argued that witchcraft-related violence may be an expression of gender based violence, given the preponderant number of women who are accused in relation to men. We motivated for the applicability of a feminist psychological lens on witchcraft accusations as the theoretical backdrop that will allow us to locate witchcraft beliefs as an expression of gender power dynamics. The doctoral project hones in on a social phenomenon influencing the position, role and treatment of women currently, in some South African communities. By virtue of its focus, this project will enable a deeper understanding of the influence of ideologies that support male dominance in contributing to the expression of 'justifiable' violence against women.

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Images:

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CHAPTER 1:

WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA AS A FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUE

Y Ally

This paper applies feminist psychological concepts to understanding an expression of violence against women in South Africa. A feminist psychological understanding is essential if one is to effectively address the issue of gendered violence. In South Africa, gendered violence also finds expression in the form of witchcraft accusations in communities where the belief in witchcraft is a reality. Responsible for misfortunes, successes and illnesses the accused 'witch' is faced with violent behaviour, from family, friends and the community at large. In this paper, we argue that witchcraft accusations can and must be viewed as an expression of gendered violence or violence against women. Previous research indicates females as the major preponderant of this labelling. Understanding witchcraft related violence from a feminist psychology perspective will allow us to effectively formulate interventions that target the actual issue – violence against women – by focusing on gendered relations.

Keywords: witchcraft; gender based violence; violence against women; South Africa; feminist psychological theory; gender relations

INTRODUCTION

Violence is a global health problem. Each year, violence claims an estimated 1.6 million people and results in a variety of health and social consequences (Dahlberg & Butchart, 2005). Defining violence is a matter of judgement given that socio-cultural conditions, norms and values continuously evolve. The definition of violence by the World Health Organisation is utilised given that is has a public health focus. Within this focus, the World Health Organisation bases their definition in a way that captures the range of acts by perpetrators and includes the subjective experiences of the victims.

According to the World Health Organisation, violence is defined within three broad categories or typologies. These are self-directed acts of violence, where a person inflicts harm upon him or herself; interpersonal violence, which refers to violence committed by another individual or a small group and collective violence, referring to violence inflicted by larger groups such as political, militia or terrorist organisations (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002). Violence against women is a universal phenomenon that persists in all countries of the world, and the perpetrators of that violence are often known to their victims (Morena, Jansen, Ellsberg, Helse & Watts, 2005). On the basis of the typologies of violence provided by the World Health Organisation, violence against women falls in the interpersonal violence realm.

Although intimate-partner violence and sexual coercion are the most 'common' types of violence affecting women and girls, in many parts of the world violence takes on special characteristics according to cultural and historical conditions, and includes murders in the name of honour, female genital mutilation, and violence in situations of armed conflict (Morena et al 2005). Another expression of violence against women, central to this paper, is witchcraft accusations.

The violation of human rights through witchcraft-related violence in Africa was recently brought to the fore in a document submitted to the United Nations by the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU, 2009) indicating the seriousness of this form of violence. Although an accurate estimate cannot be provided for the number of persons killed annually in South Africa on charges of witchcraft, as these violent acts are often not recorded as such or even, goes unreported; it can be stated that the issue prevails and that an understanding thereof is required (Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998; Leff, Fontleve & Martin, 2008). This is essential if violence in all its expressions is to be understood and ultimately addressed.

Research that tackles the phenomenon of witchcraft has long been the focus of many scholarly endeavours. These studies have immensely aided our understanding of a subject that is difficult to define. This definitional difficulty is not based on the negative, stereotyped, connotations that are conjured when one thinks of the term, but rather the *supernatural* implications that the term poses. As indicated in the literature, there are two parts to the description of witchcraft.

First, witchcraft is the use of magic obtained from a (sexual) pact with the Devil. This pact provides the witch (user of the magic) with the ability to harm other people - by causing illnesses, diseases and an array of misfortunes (Burne, 1914). This also includes a host of social, medical and psychological symptoms that indicate misfortune, lunacy and pain (Ally, 2010). Snakebites, sterility, accidents, psychological disorders and even impotence may be attributed to witchcraft (Adinkrah, 2004; Ally and Laher, 2006; Hole, 1940). A 'witch' is one able to wield this power, and thus considered at times to be the source of misfortune, death, relationship problems, a lack of progress in life and even business losses (Adinkrah, 2004).

Secondly, witchcraft is defined as having a 'good' or a white side. The essential difference between black and white magic is that the latter is employed to counter the effects of black magic. These definitions are often associated with individuals who remove the effects of black

or 'harmful' witchcraft from their victims (Eldam, 2002). Essentially though, the term is associated with the use of occult or natural entities or substances found in nature to cause *harm* and *havoc* in people's lives (Levack, 1987).

Importantly, witchcraft has an association with violence that takes the form of witch-hunts which has been documented throughout history (Briggs, 2002; Levack, 1995; Hole, 1939; Burne, 1914). The most prominent accounts of these accusations stemmed from the Salem witch trials and European inquisitions that occurred roughly, between the 14th and 18th century. Although accusations in these contexts have ended due to what some describe as the rationalization of the world (Ivey & Myers, 2009), women and some men in other parts of the world continue to be affected by witchcraft-related accusations and face violent consequences as a result (Mafico, 1986; Niehaus, 1993; 1998; Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998; Ciekawy & Geschiere, 1998; Bahre, 2002; Adinkrah, 2004; Leff, Fontleve & Martin, 2008).

Although different disciplines have posited various understandings of witch-hunts (Lea, 1906; Summers, 1927; Parrinder, 1963; Dundes, 1965; Mafico, 1986; Kieckhefer, 1990; Niehaus, 1993; 2002; 2005; Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998; Ciekawy & Geschiere, 1998; Bahre, 2002; Adinkrah, 2004; Leff, Fontleve & Martin, 2008), the application of feminist psychological theory to the experience of witchcraft accusations in South Africa is limited.

In this paper we attempt to explain witchcraft-related violence in South Africa using feminist psychological theory as a frame of reference. This is based on the assumption that witch-hunts are essentially about the restoration of gender power and the person behind the witch label comes to represent a threat to the assigned gender roles and the behaviours associated with these roles. This theoretical assumption allows for the exploration of witch-hunts as an expression of gender based violence which is steeped in a tradition of powered gender

relations. The following section looks at previous studies on witchcraft accusations and its often associated violent consequences.

EXPLANATIONS FOR WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS

There are various explanations for witchcraft accusations. Typically, these arguments indicate how certain changes within society create a vulnerable, marginalised group of people who by virtue of their positioning within society attract witchcraft accusations.

One example of such explanation suggests that witchcraft accusations took place simultaneously with the struggles of monotheistic denominations. Trevor-Roper (1979, p. 203) says "…almost every outbreak of the witch-hunt … that was limited to a particular place can be attributed to the aggression of one religion against the other. Religious wars led to the worst period of witch persecutions…" It is further reported by Heinemann (2000) that Catholics and Protestants were trying to achieve dominance of belief by suppressing the views of their opponents in Europe, who were Pagans. In Africa, Christianity was violently introduced by missionaries who, in a manner that reflected their European counterparts, believed that pre-Christian religious and cultural systems reflected worship of the Devil (Stark, 2003).

A second example to illustrate the creation of a marginalised, and easily targeted group, has been linked to economic and social change. The advent of capitalism, as well as differing perspectives of charity, turned the lower income members of society into liabilities. Historians like Salmon (1989, p. 484) have conceptualized witches as beggars who were turned away by more prosperous community members. These prosperous individuals would accuse the beggar of witchcraft "to salve the conscience or justify the selfishness of those who refused charity" (Salmon, 1989, p. 484). Others, still, because of their economic success were accused of employing the art of witchcraft (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999; Roy, 1998). Despite these two positions, economic deprivation and differentiation is established as essential to understanding

witchcraft accusations, as most of Europe's accused 'witches' came from small agricultural villages that were part of a peasant economy (Briggs, 2002).

While economic explanations focused on the accumulation of wealth by those involved in the accusations, the political arguments indicate a transcendence of material wealth to power and influence. Here, accusations of witchcraft were believed to be levelled at farm-owning peasants by their wealthier counter-parts (Briggs, 2002). This has been theorized as serving the purpose of removing the farm-owners from their property to the benefit of wealthier individuals (Federici, 1988). Accordingly, the advent of the capitalist society resulted in many farm-owning peasants being robbed off their lands by their wealthy bourgeoisie counter-parts in order for them to accumulate individual wealth and subsequent political power and influence (Federici, 1988).

Other studies like those by Evans-Pritchard (1937) and Briggs (2002) have argued that witchcraft beliefs are linked to experiences of misfortune, rivalry and jealousy and that these beliefs can be regarded as an expression of conflict. This indicates that witchcraft beliefs play the role of a social buffer which removes personal autonomy from misfortune and locates this misfortune as stemming from *within* the social context – rather than as the consequence of individual behaviour. Thus, accusations of witchcraft were projections of personal experiences of misfortune – which came to be seen as the doings of an 'evil' destructive witch.

Studies within the psychology domain indicated that physical abandonment and abuse, material deprivation, financial neglect and isolation are some of the consequences of witchcraft accusations (Adinkrah, 2004). The person accused of witchcraft becomes unable to socially survive and may fall prey to homelessness, violence and isolation. The defamation of one's character through an accusation of witchcraft can be said to manifest in psychological and physical abuse, emotional trauma and distress, and death. Assani (1996, as cited in Adinkrah,

2004) supports this by indicating that amongst the myriad of responses available to suspicions of employing witchcraft; violent aggression against the witch may result in either fatal or non-fatal assaults. This is also evident in the work by Badoe (2005) whose study on women accused of witchcraft in Ghanaian society indicated that women suspected of witchcraft were often isolated in a place called Gambaga, or more commonly known as 'the village of the witches'. Here, women live out their lives without much contact from their family, friends or community and in most cases; the living conditions are not conducive to a constructive lifestyle.

There are other studies within psychology that have located bewitchment from within the perspective of psychopathology, or even the expression of psychological distress. Symptoms typical of psychological disturbances (Ally, 2007; 2010 a; 2010 b) and mental illnesses (Ally, 2007; Dein, 2003; Eldam, 2001; Beuster, 1997; Ivey & Myers, 2009) are taken as indications of either the presence of bewitchment or spirit possession within the person afflicted, or the presence of a person (s) responsible for causing these experiences. Other studies have attempted the application of depth psychology to understanding reasons behind witchcraft accusations (Heinemann, 2000).

These explanations have immensely contributed to understanding witchcraft accusations and the reasons why violence was a consequence met by the accused. Social power, wealth and even jealousy have been posited as explanations for violent acts against accused witches. Ultimately, it can be said that an accusation of witchcraft serves the purpose of removing an individual from a position of power or threat, to the benefit of another's gain. What most of these studies have not focused on however is the gendering of witchcraft accusations. While men (albeit in minority numbers) may face accusations, it is primarily women who are accused (Briggs, 2002). This holds true for South African witchcraft accusations as well (Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998).

The following section explores gender and witchcraft accusations.

GENDER AND WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS

Generally, when one thinks of a witch, one is automatically drawn towards the stereotypical image of 'ugly', 'old', 'haggard' *women*. In line with this commonly held stereotype of witches, and in addition to the supernatural and evil connotation ascribed to them, women and mostly elderly women have been accused, sentenced and killed. This notion is historically consistent with the accusations levelled and resultant witch-burnings that occurred during the European Inquisition and Salem Trials (Briggs, 2002; Hester, 1992).

There is evidence within the literature that women are predominantly accused of witchcraft (de Blecourt, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Bass, 1976; Griffin, 1995). In 1998, a study commissioned by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa reported women, particularly elderly women as being the primary victims of witchcraft accusations (Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998). Hammes (1977) suggests that a potential explanation for witch-hunters' focus on older women was simply due to them taking the path of least resistance which they found amongst old women. On this, Baschwitz (1990) says that witch-hunts were an attack against those elderly women who were weak, lonely, and unpopular, and in cases, beggars. One can also interpret this as an attempt to remove unproductive persons who are in a sense dependent on more able persons.

But Briggs (2002), de Blecourt (2000), Jackson (1995), Bass (1976), Griffin (1995) inform us that young women too could be accused of witchcraft. Other literature on gender and witch-hunts indicated that the women accused represented a threat in some way or the other and it was this threat that served as the primary motivation for the hunt (Heinemann, 2000).

It thus almost seems as if women represent a threat by nature of their existence to men and that through their embodied characteristics (as wife, age, class, beauty, body image, sexuality) may represent a threat to feminine roles that are considered acceptable and encouraged. For example, it has been suggested that the religious, legal, political, educational and material institutions both create and reinforce expectations about how men and women should behave (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1995; Holmes, 1995; Narayan *et al.,* 2000). These provide not only men, but women with indications of behaviour that are deemed acceptable. Women may themselves therefore, find it difficult to explain expressions of femininity that do not conform to the standards that have been prescribed by a patriarchal system. Expectations about how men and women should behave in their society are the most fundamental distinctions made between people rooted in patriarchy. Badoe (2005, p. 42), in her exploration of accused witches in Ghanaian society suggested that "… those most vulnerable to witchcraft accusations were widowed women in late-middle age, who were forced to move back to their fathers' houses after the death of their husbands. There, with their brothers and their brothers' many wives in control, they soon became targets of ill will. Also vulnerable were successful businesswomen, who headed their own households; women without children to provide them with leverage within the extended family; and women without an adult male brother from the same mother to protect their interests in the extended family".

With the threat women may pose at hand, we must consider with more depth the religio-cultural argument as it will add to our understanding of women as the primary accused. Paganism is a term that was popularized by Christians from around the fourth century, to refer to pre-Christian religious belief systems (Stark, 2003). Paganism refers to many different ancient religions, ritual and spiritual practices of pre-Christian peoples. Paganism does not have a central authority as is the case with monotheism, and a religious hierarchy is absent. A strong environmental ethic exists which is expressed through veneering the Divine Feminine, mostly

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portrayed as 'Earth Mother' or 'Goddess of the Earth' (Stark, 2003). Indicative from this is that the Church, aiming to establish religious dominance, overturned the matriarchal view of women as autonomous or equal to men in all spheres of life.

Rising during the Middle-Ages, Christianity, being patriarchal, ensured that the voice of women was subdued to that of men and that women assumed a position in religion, and subsequently society, that was aligned to the domination of men over women (Stark, 2003). This was enhanced by the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1487 by Sprenger & Institoris, wherein the authors adhered to the principles of Christianity in defining witchcraft and witches (Broedel, 2003). Accordingly, these authors stated in their famous work, that women, since the creation of Eve, were not able to resist the temptations of the Devil, as men were able to. And, since the *Malleus Maleficarum* produced that witches engage in sexual intercourse with the Devil, the text positioned women as inferior to as and weaker than men. It stated that "the Devil being traditionally a male creature mainly had to pursue women…and therefore his followers would also have to be mostly women" (Broedel, 2003). In addition to a susceptibility of women to evil, an association of 'women' and 'witch' was established. Following texts like the *Malleus Maleficarum,* witch-hunters thus hunted women who did not function according to the principles of womanhood specified by Christian doctrine.

While with Paganism women (with or without power) were revered, Christianity demonized and constructed such female power as an act of the Devil. Power here, refers to economic, political, and social power as well as that implied by skills, like midwifery, which was in conflict with the emerging male profession of medicine and science This links to another strand of explanations that position the accused women as having very powerful skills, believed and interpreted as having the capacity to harm and cause destruction.

Among the skills believed to aid witches in their malevolence, was their knowledge. Women during Middle-Age Europe were well equipped with skills as midwives, indicating that they were knowledgeable of natural and hallucinogenic substances (Heinemann, 2000). In addition, these women also clashed with the then emerging medical professions, which were mainly regarded as the domain of men. Thus men were threatened by the knowledge women possessed and through witchcraft accusations, re-established a gendered relation which saw men as knowledge producers and users, while women functioned as actors to that power.

In South Africa too, medicine women know commonly as *isangoma* or *inyanga,* are often faced with fear and may at times, have accusations of 'witch' thrown at them from neighbours and community members (Personal communication, 2009; 2010). One can state that the fear of what women were capable of achieving was transposed through a religio-cultural belief that interpreted "women as midwives" or, "women as healers" as an easy means for women to get magical ointment ingredients – typically believed to be found in new-born or still-born babies "who had not yet been baptized" (Heinemann, 2000, p. 21).

Although the gendering of witchcraft in the literature reviewed, accentuated on the issues surrounding witchcraft accusations and have contributed to our understanding, they do not comprehensively bring together a gendered analysis of the phenomenon. This indicates that within the corpus of academic research, understanding witchcraft and witch-hunts has not effectively alluded to the underpinning discourse: the gender relation between males and females, that is intrinsic to all witchcraft accusations. Gendered relations essentially, are 'powered'. Winter (2000), for example, informs us that power is control held by a person or a group of persons over the behaviour and conditions of life of another.

Gender power, linked to the threat men may experience by the skill and power of some women, manifests in labelling and stereotyping, like accusations of witchcraft. Female power is

explored extensively by feminists who indicate that power is often associated with masculinity or male control over females and accusations of 'women as witches' may be seen as a means to restore male control over female sexuality (Sawicki, 1991; Winter, 2000; Castle, 2005). This merits the focus of the current paper, which attempts to do a gendered analysis of witchcraft accusations in South Africa, using a feminist psychological framework.

While there are studies that have attempted to delineate and understand the gendering of witchcraft accusations, an exploration of feminist psychological theory to witchcraft accusations in South Africa is essential. This is based on the current social climate, which seems to be conducive to violence against those accused of witchcraft.

EXPLAINING GENDER RELATIONS: FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

Feminist psychological theory to begin, found its expression from the feminist movement. With this stated, feminist psychological theory becomes explicitly political in its attempts to harness the power of psychology to improving the status of women. In order for this to be achieved, it is believed by feminist psychologists that changes within mainstream and traditional psychology must be made. Sue Wilkinson (1996, p. 3) who may be considered as a 'landmark' authority within feminist psychology indicates that "...psychology's theories often exclude women, or distort our experience – by assimilating it to male norms or man-made stereotypes, or by regarding 'women' as a unitary category, to be understood only in comparison with the unitary category 'men' ". Her work within the field suggests that feminist psychological theory attempts to expose and challenge the operation of male power within psychology. This is reflected in the writing of pioneering feminist psychologist, Naomi Weisstein (1968) who stated that women in psychology are characterised as " inconsistent, emotionally unstable, lacking in a strong conscience or superego, weaker, 'nurturant' rather than productive, 'intuitive' rather than intelligent, and, if they are at all 'normal', suited to the home and

family.". Thus, psychology theory has asserted women as inferior to men. As recently added, Moghaddam (2005, p. 261) explains to us, "...traditional psychology still reflects many of the gender biases of the larger society, albeit in subtle and implicit ways". It must also be noted, that in addition to the identification of gender inequality within psychology, a primary aim of feminist psychological theory is a social change strategy, which ultimately aims to eradicate the socio-political oppression of women (Fine, 1985).

Thus, it is a held belief amongst the feminist psychologists that by changing the traditional methodologies, approaches and practices within psychology, society may be influenced toward understanding the behaviour of males and females, with a specific reference to the limited attention given to the female experience (Crawford & Unger, 2004).

As an idea, then, feminist psychological theory enables psychologists to reconceptualise their approach on the study of males and females. In fact, it is argued from this perspective the adoption of males as the norm from which females must be judged. Rather, focus is drawn to understanding females on their own terms themselves, rather than in comparison to males (Crawford & Unger, 2004).

Among the many theories accounting for gender, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic explanation of gender role development has received both acclaim and critique. This theory claims that gender-typed behaviour is acquired by children based on their biological sex (Freud, 1914). Identification with and the adoption of the behaviours, thoughts and ideals of the same-sex parent is essential in order for the child to resolve the conflicts of the phallic stage (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2009, in Swartz, de la Rey, Duncan & Townsend, 2009; Freud, 1914). Because the child identifies with the same-sex parent, behaviours that are ideologically located, like culture and religion, begin to become the child.

Social learning theory from whom Bandura (1975) is exalted, believed that gender roles are learnt due to a process involving observation, imitation and differential reinforcement of actions. This entire series of actions is often based on gender-stereotypic models that children observe in the world (often with social approval) (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2002).

Theories of gender within psychology therefore indicate that the process of same-sex identification and learning from the social environment leads to the creation of gendered relations which position males in authority, while females are meant to function from within this perspective (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2002).

Further indicated from these two examples of theories of gender development is that within psychology gender is theorized in ways that reinforce the perspective of males as dominant. In fact, most of the theories, not only of gender, in psychology have been developed using males as subjects (Crawford & Unger, 2004; Gilbert & Eby, 2004; Moghaddam, 2005; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2009, in Swartz, de la Rey, Duncan & Townsend, 2009). Some theories have even excluded women from their data as women's behaviour was explained as a deviation from the (male) standard (Shefer, Boozaier & Kiguwa, 2006).

It is this gender-bias theoretical rooting that gave rise to the psychology of gender. Rich and vast, it has influenced perhaps many theories within psychology. For example, neo-Freudian psychoanalytic theorists like Karen Horney (1950) and Nancy Chodorow (1990) modified Freud's emphasis on men as the ideal human form. Horney (1950) emphasised cultural influences and proposed that men experience envy of pregnancy, the breast and of mothering. Chodorow (1990; 1992) concluded that the development of different identities for boys and girls was not so much a process of same-parent identification, but was rather based on women's involvement in mothering.

In general, feminist psychological theorists argue that gender is socially constructed, with the implication that gender is not inherent to the biology of the person but rather based on social interactions. These interactions are based on power differences that exist between men and women. They create much of the observed gender differences. It is in light of the traditional focus on males in psychology that feminist psychologists argue that in order to effectively address the gender differences between males and females in society – which may be a reason for the many social ills – one must consider the gender power differential.

It then becomes important for us to consider gender power relations. Of importance here, are those gendered relations that lend to the expression of violence. However, since there are not many studies, both internationally and local to the South African context, that apply feminist psychological theory to understanding witchcraft accusations and its violent consequences, a focus on application of feminist theory to witchcraft accusations is essential. We redirect our understanding of witchcraft accusations in South Africa as an instance of gender-based violence or violence against women. This will allow us to explore what feminist psychological theory indicates about gendered violence. With this perspective, we will then be informed to apply feminist psychology theories to understanding an expression of gendered violence within the South African context.

FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Despite the emergence of a feminism, which aims at the promotion of gender equality, the reality of the social world in which we find ourselves is that gender roles and norms still function in many instances, to the principles of patriarchy. This indicates to us, that boys and men, girls and women are socialised in particular ways that either promote them as superior to, or sublimating to each other.

There may not be a better way to express this view, than by a focus on the continued violence against women which has become a widespread human rights, social and public health problem. Boonzaier (2008) informs us that the issue affects the lives of women worldwide, with it also being endemic in South African society. Boozaier (2008) inadvertently informs us in her studies in South African society, is that the expression of violence from males to females is underpinned by men attempting to hold on to hegemonic forms of masculinty. Feminist psychologist Boozaier (2008) draws on the work of Wood (2001) to argue that women in abusive relationships attach meaning by "drawing on the available repertoire of discursive resources provided" (p. 184). These resources it is argued, are reinforced by cultures and traditions that enforce discourses of gender that reflect male dominance.

For example, White and Kowalski (1996) theorised a wide range of factors that contribute to the expression of violence against women. Central to this model, which is built on five interactive levels, is the socio-cultural context. This context it is argued holds historical and cultural values, which are often patriarchal. This ideological stance gives males higher value than women and places men as the leaders in all aspects of the social world. Importantly, White and Kowalski (1996) state that the intricate relation patriarchy shares with culture and tradition, affects the power dynamics within all relationships. White and Kowalski (1996, p. 441) say that "power dynamics become enacted at the interpersonal level and results in the internalization of gendered values, expectations, and behaviors". What they also inadvertently allude toward, is that violence against women is an assertion of patriarchal control and power.

Dobash and Dobash (1979) also premised their study of women abuse on patriarchy and male domination and they specifically indicated how male control over women was maintained because of traditional ideas about marriage, the family and gender roles. Their study specifically indicated that men were found to be more violent towards their wives when they

perceived their wives as not fulfilling their prescribed gender roles (e.g. 'good wife', 'good mother').

This patriarchal 'powering' that favours men and places women as actors within a male domain have however, come under critique. Specifically, this has come from black feminists who motion that earlier feminist focuses on patriarchal influences on violence against women, was motivated singularly by a focus on gender, while excluding other variables which may contribute to the experience of violence. This perspective needs more elaboration, given its centrality to the paper. Boonzaier (2006, in Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006) argues that "it becomes important to explore violence against women as a problem fundamentally influenced by gender and power but nested within a broader context characterised by other systems of domination and inequity" (pg. 140). These systems and inequities is a reference to other constructs, like race, class, sexuality etc. Traditionally, feminist thought excluded the views and perspectives of those who were not middle class or white.

As such, an exclusion of the experiences of disadvantaged black women as explored by Richie and Kanuha (1997) would imply not recognising the effects of poverty, marginalisation and a lack of access to resources may have complicated the experience of abuse. In his study, Johnson (1995) showed that patriarchal systems have resulted in attempts from males to dominate their wives, with violence against them as one such expression, which escalates over time. Additionally he has indicated that research from the feminist perspective began with a narrower focus on the issue of wife beating, developing a literature that focuses on factors specific to violence perpetrated against women by their male partners (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Martin, 1981; Roy, 1976; Walker, 1984). He furthermore maintains that, the emphasis within the feminist tradition to understandings of violence has been entrenched with historical traditions of the patriarchal family, contemporary constructions of masculinity and femininity, and structural constraints that make escape difficult for women who are systematically beaten. This

emphasis must be viewed in its applicability to understanding violence against women as stemming from patriarchal ideology, despite the need to incorporate other contextual variables into a feminist analysis.

Specifically, research on women's experience of violence has been highlighted and include work on class (Gonzales de Olarte & Gaviloano Llosa), race (Crenshaw, 1991; Mama, 1996), sexuality (Shefer et al, 2000) and other forms of difference (Shefer, Boonzaier and Kiguwa, 2006). Crenshaw (1991) for example, has located her understanding of wife battering, at the intersection of race and gender. In South Africa, Womersley and Maw (2009) present a feminist discourse analysis of their conversations with rape victims. They premised their study in response to feminist researchers, both in South Africa and internationally, who have called for more research on rape trauma in light of the marginalised and oppressive context within which women live.

South African research which focused on violence in heterosexual relations have highlighted how constructions of masculine and feminine identities, gender and heterosexuality inform relations for both men and women (Leclerc-Madlala, 2000; Shefer, Strebel and Foster, 2000; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2003; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). Womersley also informs us that there are several unpublished theses which have focused on exploring the psychological impact of rape on women from marginalised groups, confirming that socio-cultural context influences meaning making and thus post-rape recovery (Booley, 2007; de Swardt, 2006; Duma, 2006; Sonnie, 2003).

In the South African context, the shift within feminist thought towards inclusion of variables in addition to gender and patriarchy is essential. The inclusion of variables beyond gender and patriarchy is based on the social experiences which has shaped much of the psyches of the people in South Africa. Going beyond whether the voices of white women echo the experiences

of black women, viewing violence against women as an extension of interplay between patriarchy, gender power, and other social variables allows us to exonerate on expressions of violence that fall on the outskirts of what has been the traditional focus in feminist theory. Much of the literature on violence against women/gender based violence as explored using feminist psychological frameworks, has been on issues linked to domestic violence, spousal aggression, homicide and even rape. But in South Africa and in many other regions in the world, cultural beliefs influence the expression of violence against women.

Underpinned by patriarchal ideology, culture and religion provides expressions for violence in ways that are deemed acceptable. Witchcraft accusations and its associated violent consequences is one such example. But a problem faced in terms of defining witchcraft accusations and its associated violence from a feminist psychological perspective is linked to the under-explored nature of the phenomenon from this perspective. The following section will draw on explaining witchcraft accusation using a feminist psychological framework. It does so, drawing on the conclusions and arguments put forth by feminist psychologists, who focused on more known expressions of gender based violence.

Using these feminist psychological understandings of gender based violence the following section extrapolates these ideas to witchcraft accusations and its associated violent consequences in South Africa.

WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS EXPLAINED THROUGH THE LENS OF FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

Drawing on the feminist psychological perspectives above, a working model was developed to represent witchcraft accusations in South Africa as an expression of gendered violence, located within a specific socio-cultural climate. All the studies that were reviewed inadvertently point in the direction of a particular gendered relation that is powered by ideologies (patriarchy) and

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precipitated by other contextual variables, like race, sexuality, class etc. The result is violence against women, with the ultimate discursive goal of (re) establishing a gender order that functions in accordance to males as productive and dominant, with females as mere actors to this power.

As can be seen in the model above, culture and religious beliefs feed patriarchal ideologies which place men in positions superior to women. The implications of this positioning are gendered relations, powered by a structure that is difficult to escape.

In contexts where the belief in witchcraft holds sway, the experience of misfortune is projected onto a powerful being, the witch. These witches are more often than not associated with women. This projection is also fuelled by the fear of what bewitchment may be capable of. With its limitless boundaries, witches are believed to be capable of negatively influencing every sphere in another's life.

'Powerful' women then, who in essence are transgressing the ideological, cultural and religious norms which dictates gender roles, are placed within the category of marginalised individuals. Because they are bold, have skill and in many cases occupy the roles that are mostly designated for men, these women are considered strange. This strangeness is then defined in terms of a witchcraft accusation. This enables community members, who function from within the framing of particular ideologies, to make sense of these 'strange' women. Due to their transgression of gendered relations, the accusation of witchcraft, allows for the labelling of the women to occur and for the community in question to 'make sense of' behaviour from women which does not adhere to ideological stances. Combined with the fear of bewitchment, it follows logically that any person associated with such a label, will be feared. This fear is steeped in a tradition that views witchcraft as having the capacity to ruin one's life (social, psychological, biological etc.). As such, a person associated with this labelling, will not only

be feared, because fear in itself implies immobility of the community to protect itself and subsuming to the power of an evil craft.

The violence against the accused witch then, represents firstly, an interpersonal attempt to re-establish a gendered relation where men occupy positions of power in most spheres of life. Secondly, it reduces the fears of bewitchment and misfortune by 'removing' the source of the misfortune. Thirdly, the violence against the accused sends a message regarding the gender order as it functions within the context in question.
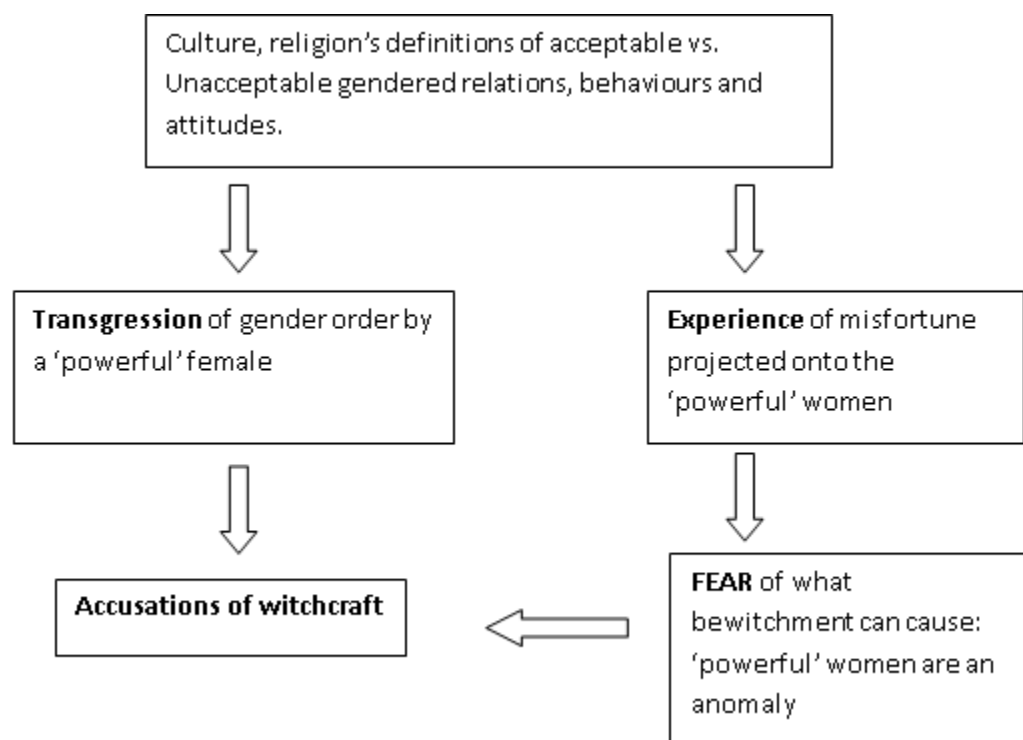
Model 1: Representation of Witchcraft Accusations in South Africa

Witchcraft accusations thus must be seen as an expression of a particular gender relation that is underpinned by the view of males as dominant, with females functioning from within this power. The accused are typically females accused by their male counter-parts for causing harm, havoc, destruction and bring on misfortune (s). When an accusation of witchcraft is levelled from a known source, one may draw on those explanatory frames that indicate jealousy

and envy as primary motivating factors for the accusation. There are other instances where accusations may be stated against a woman as she comes to represent a political threat or an economic barrier for those in positions of power.

Studies in feminist psychological theory have suggested that variables like race, class and sexuality must be included in the analysis of gendered violence (Crawford & Unger, 2000). But on a whole, the dyadic between the accuser of witchcraft and the accused may be taken as representation of a particular gendered relation that is underpinned by patriarchal ideology. From within this ideological influence, which is felt in every society in the world, males are given more power and more authority over females. This inadvertently places females as actors in a world where knowledge creation is centred on males. This gendered relation can thus be seen as a covert expression of a constant struggle with power – where males continuously reinforce their authority and dominance over females. Studies have suggested this link (Fine, 1985), but these studies have also indicated that violence from a male toward a female may be taken as an overt expression of a males struggle to maintain power over a female (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003).

With witchcraft accusations we can state that it comes to represent this power dynamic in a manner that is consistent within a particular socio-cultural context. A context within which, supernatural beliefs hold sway and influence the thinking and behaviour of people. In a Western community, a female who is sexually expressive, or dominates within the corporate world, may be labelled as 'slut' or 'bitch' – based on them taking control over their sexuality and sexual expression or by assuming a position within the world, that is meant for men i.e. the role of provider. In contexts where witchcraft belief exists the 'witch' label fulfils the same function. It firstly, enables a male to express his dissatisfaction with the behaviour of a female. Secondly it allows for the removal of power that this female has, whether this is real or imagined by the

male, through the use of violence to dis-empower her. The witch hunt – an expression of gender based violence does two things.

The outcome of the accusation, which in more instances than others cannot be contained, is violence and lethal violence. Discursively too, the violence with which those who are accused meet, can be to ensure that those accused women – who are perceived as a threat by those around them – will not survive the attack. This is important, as even though the violence against the accused is carried out by groups of people (Barstow, 1994), the accusation begins within a gendered relation. Through the dyadic contact, a restoration of a gendered relation is re-established. Additionally and quite importantly, this sends a message within the socio-cultural context to both males and females, about 'how things are done'. This strips women of the opportunity to progress economically, or to independently, without the aid of males to live within a society, which still functions in accordance to perspectives that reflect patriarchal views of gender relations.

CONCLUSION

This paper applied feminist psychological theory findings on gender based violence to understand witchcraft accusations and its associated violent consequences. The paper demonstrated through deductive reasoning how witchcraft accusations and witch hunts represent a gendered relation that is influenced by ideology (patriarchy) and the socio-cultural context. The application of feminist psychological theory to understanding witchcraft accusations was essential, given the gender power dynamic that is inherent to the accusations.

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CHAPTER 2:

NEWS PORTRAYALS OF WITCHCRAFT RELATED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRINT MEDIA: A FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

Y Ally

Media is one of the most powerful factors influencing modern human perception and behaviour and thus, understanding the portrayal of witchcraft related violence in the media is essential. The need to understand media portrayals of witchcraft related violence becomes more apparent in the South African context where witchcraft accusations and violence against those accused of being witches is a continuing reality. In this paper, it is argued that the manner of reporting witchcraft accusations may contribute to gendered violence. A feminist psychological perspective draws us towards acknowledging the role media plays in perpetuating a particular gendered relation. This allows us to locate the role media portrayals of witchcraft accusations may be having on violence against women. The analysis produced three findings: (i) types of violent consequences faced by persons accused of witchcraft; (ii) witchcraft accusations, gender-based violence and feminist psychological understanding and; (iii) witchcraft accusations, media and feminist psychological implications. The study indicates that news reports are framed in ways that focus on witchcraft, rather than violence against women and in so doing, media may be entrenching the male dominated status quo.

Key words: witches; witch-hunts; gender, feminist psychological theory; media; witchcraft; gender roles

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is known around the world for its high rates of violence generally (Donson, 2008) and violence against women specifically (Abrahams, Jewkes, Laubscher & Hoffman, 2006; Altbeker, 2006; Altbeker, 2007; Mathews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Van der Merwe & Jewkes, 2004; Suffla, Van Niekerk & Arendse, 2008). For example, the South African Police Service (2008) recorded 18 487 reports of murder and 210 104 reports of grievous assault in 2007-2008 in South Africa, at a rate of 38.6/100 000 and 439.1/100 000 respectively; amongst the highest rates in the world. While the problem of violence is a global one, claiming approximately 1.6 million lives each year and leaving millions more living with physical disability as well as a host of social and psychological consequences (Krug, Dahlberg, Merci, Zwi, Lozano, 2002), understanding violence and factors that lend themselves to violence in such a violent context as South Africa is urgent. Violence here is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (World Health Organization, 1996).

The contexts of violence differ from country to country. The World Health Organisation indicates that expressions of violence evolve as per the socio-cultural belief system, norms and values of a community. Amongst the many contextual factors that have been indicated as related to high rates of violence is socio-economic inequality, masculinity and alcohol abuse (Ratele, Swart & Seedat, 2009; Wood, 2006). However, a relatively neglected area in South African psychology is the influence of supernatural religio-cultural beliefs on violence. Although recent years have seen a burgeoning interest in the area (Geschiere, 2000; Geschiere & Fisiy, 1994; Hall, 2001; Ivey & Meyers, 2008a & b), the topic remains underexplored.

Research that focuses on religio-cultural beliefs like witchcraft and the bewitched often portrays the witch as a malevolent being responsible for others' misfortune (Summers, 1945; Levack, 1995; Briggs, 2002). The malevolent and evil portrayal of the witch figure merits understanding witchcraft portrayals as those referred to as witches are often associated with responsibility for others' misfortunes and are often subject to discrimination, prejudice, psychological abuse and physical violence that appears to stem from the fear of the misfortune bewitchment can cause (Stark, 2003). Consequently, those accused of being witches are subject to violent encounters from family, friends, neighbours and the wider community, what we refer to as witch-hunts.

Witches are feared as they are thought to affect or have the capacity to cause misfortune to property, health, wealth, psychological functioning and even beauty (Briggs, 2002; Ivey & Myers, 2007; Levack, 1995). Although witchcraft accusations may have ended in some parts of the world (Heinemann, 2000), the phenomenon remains a reality in other contexts such as South Africa where witchcraft accusations affect the lives of many people (Mayar, 1954, Minnaar, Wentzel & Payze, 1998).

This paper examines reports of witchcraft accusations in South African print media using feminist psychological principles. Given the role that media plays in modern human affairs, an analysis of media's role in circulating gendered norms and stereotypes must be understood. Understanding these norms and stereotypes is essential, given that media portrayals of witchcraft accusations may perpetuate gendered relations of inequality and subordination. The following section briefly looks at witchcraft explanations that have been posited by theorists whose explanations focus on gender relations.

EXPLANATIONS FOR WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS

There are many explanations for witchcraft accusations that have been offered in attempts to understand the phenomenon, covering religion and culture (Stark, 2003), economics and social change (Baiten & Woitek, 2003; Salmon, 1989), political factors (Federici, 1988; Harris, 1974; Niehaus, 1998) and even belief (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Kapferer, 2003; Morrison & Thornton, 1999). The discipline of Psychology has also contributed to the efforts to understand witchcraft accusations, with explanations ranging from fear (Ally & Laher, 2006; Geschiere, 2000), to psychopathology (Ivey & Myers, 2008) and even jealousy and hatred (Levack, 1995; Mbiti, 1990). The explanations described above are broad and vast, but the central tenet of the arguments rests with the creation of a group of people, marginalised and vulnerable, who by virtue of their positioning within society, attract witchcraft accusations. These explanations have broadened our understanding of the phenomenon and have drawn on expertise from various disciplines.

There seems to be consensus that women are predominantly accused of witchcraft (Bass, 1976; de Blecourt, 2000; Griffin, 1995; Jackson, 1995). The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) reported that women, particularly elderly women were the primary victims of witchcraft accusations (Minnaar, Wentzel & Payze, 1998). A potential explanation for elderly women being accused is provided by Hammes (1977) who informs us that this focus was possibly linked to witch-hunters taking the path of least resistance. Baschwitz (1990) informs

us that these women may be economically unproductive and in many instances dependent on more able persons and thus a focus on elderly women as witches was firstly, 'easy', and secondly, removed the economic burden they may have posed to care-givers.

Briggs (2002) in contrast to a focus on elderly women enlightens us that young women too, could find themselves accused of witchcraft. Heinemann (2000) simplifies the young-old debate by saying that any woman accused of witchcraft represented a threat in some way or the other and it was this threat that served as the primary motivation for the witch hunt. Thus women seem to attract witchcraft accusations regardless of their age, based on the threat (economic, social, and psychological) they represent within their society. For example, Stark's (2003) studies inform us that an association between 'female' and 'witch' became apparent during the attempts of the Church to dominate placing Christian ideology as a central belief. During this period he states, some men, in their attempts to eradicate Pagan belief – which revered women – created an association of female power with the Devil and in so doing, put women into a category that was marginalised, vulnerable and feared. These 'witches' thus, needed to be removed from their communities in order for the Devil to be removed. It thus seems that religion and belief were used by some men to remove women from positions of power by associating them and their skills with evil and malevolence. Witchcraft accusations, it follows, may serve the purpose of restoring a particular gendered relation, faced by 'threatening' or 'powerful' women.

Based on the understanding of women associated with witchcraft we argue that a feminist psychological framework, will allow us to explore witchcraft accusations as reported in media and how these reports may feed a particular gender order that favours males. Given the centrality of media to influence our decisions, choices and behaviour understanding the gender order that is portrayed and perceived by the public based on media reports becomes essential. The following section briefly explores feminist psychological theory and gender based violence or violence against women.

FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Feminist psychological theory argues that the tradition within psychology theory has been to focus predominantly on the experiences of males and to extrapolate findings based on studies on males to describe the female experience (Wilkinson, 1996). It is argued further by feminist psychologists that women within psychology are described as "inconsistent, emotionally unstable, lacking in a strong conscience or superego, weaker, 'nurturant' rather than

productive, 'intuitive' rather than intelligent, and, if they are at all 'normal', suited to the home and family" (Weisstein, 1968, p. 150). Feminist psychological theory essentially is political – like feminism – with the primary aim of bringing to conscious awareness (and ending) the systematic oppression of women (Fine, 1992). Feminist psychological theory like feminism, aims at rectifying the uneven gender relations that influence daily life and as is found in theories of psychology (Butler, 1999; Gilligan, 1977; Goldstein, 1982). Feminists have developed their understanding of gender relations and indicate the influence of multiple factors on the expression of violence against women, like culture, sex and age (Crawford & Unger, 2008). Despite the shift from a singular focus on patriarchy, gender roles and norms remain patriarchal.

There are many studies focusing attention on gender based violence and the issue is recognised as a global health and human rights issue (Moreno, Jansen, Elisberg, Heise & Watts, 2005). UNICEF (1997) in light of concern for the experience of gender based violence, cites it as the most pervasive violation of human rights.

Violence against women persists as a universal problem in all countries of the world (Moreno et al, 2005). Women are often the targets of physical and sexual assaults by their partners and unknown perpetrators (Mercy, Rosenberg, Powell, Broome & Roper, 1993). Physical violence against women refers to a woman being hit with a fist, kicked, dragged, choked, burnt on purpose, or even having a weapon used against her (Moreno et al, 2005).

It is without question then, that we would accept that gendered violence is a social, human rights and public health problem. But to what extent are we aware that gendered violence may be the expression of patriarchy – which indicates to us that men and women are socialised in ways that either promote superiority or subordination towards each other. Boonzaier (2006) accentuates further and informs us that violence against women is an attempt from men to hold on to violent forms of hegemonic masculinity. The work of Wood & Jewkes (1998) and others (Richie & Kanuha, 1997; White & Kowalski, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1979) exemplify this point. Their studies have indicated that discourses of gender inequality are perpetuated within cultures and traditions which value male dominance. Within these cultures and traditions, a transgression of gender roles where women are assumed to be subordinate to men, can manifest in violence against women. This violence often represents attempts to regain male power.

For example, Martin, Moracco, Garro, Ong Tsui, Kupper, Chase and Campbell (2002) have studied violence against women in India. They indicated that traditional rigid gender roles may

increase the likelihood of violence. They cite the case of dowries, which although outlawed in India are still widely practiced. With this tradition, the bride's family is given a financial marriage 'fee' which more often than not, is unaffordable. By not meeting this demand, the bride may face constant abuse by her husband and his family and may fall victim to homicidal death. Alternatively, she may even commit suicide in an attempt to escape the continuous harassment. Of importance to note is that the husband will be free to remarry in such a situation.

South African studies too have highlighted how the constructions of masculine and feminine identities inform relations for both men and women and how these relations may influence the likelihood of violence against women (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2003; Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006; Shefer, Strebel & Foster, 2000; Womersley & Maw, 2009).

Using the above understandings, we can state that gender-based violence represent attempts to (re) establish a particular gender relation. Thus it follows that despite the emergence of gender politics that aims to alleviate the subordination of women to men, there still exists a gender order, dictated by cultures and traditions that favours men. Essentially then, patriarchy, defined as the power males have over women, in all spheres of life, functions in expressions of violence against women (Dasgupta, 1999, 2002; Tracy, 2007). Taking patriarchy into account, violence against women is explained in terms of a power struggle and feminists argue that in a patriarchal society those with all the power, usually males, resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened (Tracy, 2007).Winter (2000) defines power as control held by a person or a group of persons over the behaviour and conditions of life of another. Other studies too, show that power is often associated with masculinity or male control over females (Boozaier, 2008; Shefer, Strebel & Foster, 2000).

Witchcraft accusations and its associated violence represent one expression of violence against women, witchcraft accusations and witch hunts; and the violence against women represents attempts from men to (re) establish their dominance, control and power over women. To this end Heinemann (2000) says that the threat men face by women who do not conform to their prescribed gender roles act as a strong motivation towards witch hunts. The need to maintain a sense of power and control over women is expressed by men through violence. Witchcraft accusations in itself may serve the function of (re) producing a particular gendered relation derived from the fear, evil and malevolence attached to witchcraft, witches and their capabilities.

In this section we have established witchcraft related violence as an expression of violence against women, in attempts to (re) establish a particular gender order, defined by the domination of males over females. The following section briefly describes the role media plays in influencing human thought.

MEDIA

Wood (1994) and Anastasio and Costa (2004) inform us that what the media says (and does not say) influences and shapes our perspectives on important issues. As elaborated by Wood (1994), "throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their messages into our consciousness at every turn" (p. 231). The representations that we are fed via the media may not be reflective of the whole truth, but rather, posited in ways that indicate certain ideologies – be they political, social, psychological or economic (Thetela, 2001). Gender bias and stereotyping often feature in media reflections and this essentially serves the purpose of perpetuating a particular gender relation that is aligned with a patriarchal ideology.

Meyer's (1997) study provides us with evidence regarding media's attempts to maintain a male dominated status quo. Her study on media reports of violence against women revealed that the manner in which media reports framed domestic and sexual violence against women blames victims with blame rather than treat them with empathy. Predominantly, women fall victim to domestic and sexual violence and thus what Meyer's (1997) study on news reports reveal is that "the real victim may be portrayed as the perpetrator of the violence – who has been driven to desperate action by his female partner". Furthermore, she indicates that violence is portrayed as an 'individual' act, in that responsibility is placed upon a single person. Such reports may take away the focus from the social context that may be engendering violence against women. Inadvertently, this finding suggests that news reports may be disguising the actual root problem. At the same time, reinforcing stereotypes and myths which blame women for the violence they face (Meyer's, 1997). Anastasio and Costa (2004) reached the conclusion that, "in this way, the news sustains and reproduces male supremacy" (p. 536).

If we extrapolate this understanding to witchcraft related violence, then the manner in which the media report witchcraft violence becomes important as it may have implications for the reproduction of a certain gendered relation that favours men. This gains merit if we consider that not only Meyers (2004) study, but the work of others (Carll, 2003; Maxwell, Huxford, Borum, & Hornik, 2000; Meyers, 1994; Meyers, 1997) have indicated how society (through media) has the tendency to normalise violence against women, adhering specifically to a

patriarchal system, that relies on political and cultural power. Additionally it seems, that media plays an important role regarding gender bias and stereotyping; essentially serving the purpose of perpetuating a particular gender relation that is aligned with a patriarchal ideology. Shufelt (2007) says that "traditional mainstream media images of witches tell us they are evil "devil worshipping baby killers, green-skinned hags who fly on brooms, or flaky tree huggers who dance naked in the woods" (g. iii). With the association suggested by Shufelt (2007), of witches associated with fear, leads us to believe that witchcraft and witches may be interpreted and understood in ways that feed certain stereotypes and which ultimately re (establishes) a gendered relation which is powered.

Curran and Seaton (1988) as well as Van Dijk's (1996) studies inform us that news texts represent the views and actions of certain social groups or classes. Implied here, is that news reports reflect certain institutional relations as well as reflect certain ideologies. Thetela (2001) for one suggests that the news is not only reported, but that it is interpreted as well. She argues that the interpretation of any event 'involves the beliefs, opinions, hopes, and aspirations of those gathering, reporting, and publishing the news'. Verschueren (1985, p.3) says that, 'ideology inevitably co-determines what gets reported, when it is reported, and how the reporting is done'. It follows that certain ideologies that favour men are so deeply rooted within society, that it finds its expression and acceptance through media.

Given this, we have to bear in mind that newspaper reports can never convey all the truth and nothing but the truth about a phenomenon in question. News reports are always framed by values, experiences and interests of journalists, editors and newspaper owners and that they may reflect certain ideologies that are dominant within society. As indicated by Thetela (2001, p.350), "research on media studies has shown that not every event reaches the news columns but that journalists use a paradigm of news values…to decide on which event is more newsworthy than others". As such news reports are framed and articulated in ways that may not reflect all of the histories and actual circumstances of the situation – but rather the dominant ideologies that are found in society, aligned with patriarchy.

Given the centrality of media influences in our lives, the manner in which media portrays witchcraft related violence may have implications for the perpetuation of a particular gendered relation. This gendered relation favours men and exemplifies hegemonic relations and most importantly, justifies violence against women, sheltered by religio-cultural beliefs, like witchcraft. The current study employs a feminist psychological framework, in answering the

question, how do the media report witchcraft accusations? And; what are the gendered implications of media's reporting of witchcraft accusations? In answering these questions, a deeper understanding of the gendered implications posed by witchcraft accusations as presented in the media will be gained.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

There are four typical methods of sampling for media content analysis (Macnamara, 2006; Newbold, Boyd-Barret & Van Den Bulck, 2002; Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). Riffe et al. (1998) suggests a purposive sampling technique may be appropriate, as it allows one to focus on the most relevant media. For the purpose of the current study, a purposive sampling technique was employed. This was based on the aim of the study, which was to specifically critically analyse the manner on which media reports witchcraft accusations and its implications on gendered relationships.

Process

The following process to identify news reports was pursued. The researcher identified news reports from the University of South Africa's online media resource. The time period for the initial search was from 1980 – 2012. This allowed the researcher to analyse witchcraft accusations as reported through different time periods, to identify if any shifts in the reporting have occurred. The following key words were used, 'witch'; 'witchcraft'; 'witch-hunts' to source the articles. Reports identified, spanned across most major and many smaller newspapers in South Africa (The Star; Witness; Independent on Saturday; Sowetan; Daily Dispatch; City Press; Mail & Guardian; Sunday Tribune; The Citizen; The Sunday Times; The Cape Times), primarily in English with a few reports in Afrikaans. A total of 365 newspaper articles were identified but 114 were selected for analysis. This was based on the following exclusion criteria.

With the aims of the study focusing on witchcraft related violence, articles reflecting ritual murders were excluded. Reports that were in languages other-than English were excluded on the basis of a lack of thorough understanding of the language. Some identified news reports focused on 'familiars' like the *tokoloshe. Tokoloshe* is a mythical creature found in some South African cultural beliefs. It is believed to be a short, round-bellied man, covered in hair and possesses a large penis. The *tokoloshe* is believed to be used by witches to do harm to others

on their command. Another exclusion criterion took the form of duplicate stories reported by different newspapers. In this case, the article that presented the most detail was included.

After the articles were identified and sourced, they were read and re-read to get both a specific and broad idea of their content. Key information was captured under headings, identified through a literature review: gender, type of violence, accused and reasons for the crime.

The next step was to analyse the articles for the content analyses with the aim of examining the role media plays in perpetuating gender stereotypes that justify gender based violence or violence against women.

Content Analysis

The first step of the analysis was content analysis. Content analysis defined by Berelson (1952, p. 18) is a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Even though this early definition captures the essence that is content analysis, it has faced certain criticisms. For example, Berger and Luckman (1966) point out that even the most scientific methods of the social sciences cannot produce totally objective results. Specifically in relation to media content, Berger and Luckman (1966) suggest media texts are open to multiple interpretations. Thus, any analysis of media content, it follows, cannot be objective. With this in mind, various researchers have added to the definition of content analysis. Kimberley Neuendorf's (2002) work with media content analysis is noteworthy. According to her, content analysis is a "summarising, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method ... and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented" (p. 10). From her work she sees content analysis as a quantitative scientific methodology, focussing on a priori designs, reliability and validity, for example (Neuendorf, 2002). She suggests that the qualitative analysis of text may be more adequately described as rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis or critical analysis.

We use content analysis to indicate sifting through large volumes of data in a systematic fashion. Given our aim, to critically examine gendered relations influenced by ideologies within society – reflected through witchcraft accusations – our approach to content analysis can be taken as falling under the humanist tradition. Thus, we are interested in the media's symbolic environment, in reflecting certain truths about society.

Despite our qualitative focus, both quantitative and qualitative media analysis are utilised in this study. Quantitatively, we must describe certain variables related to the media's reporting of witchcraft related violence. We use *a priori* coding – suggested by Neuendorf (2002) and others (Haney, Russel, Gulek & Fierros, 1998) – to extract relevant information from the news reports. A-priori coding allows the researcher to collect information around the data that feeds the analysis. For example, we must know the gender of the accused or; the consequences faced by those who are accused. These pieces of information were considered important, because it enabled the researcher to then shift attention to the ideological meaning that these numbers reflect.

In particular, feminist psychological principals were used to frame the understanding of witchcraft related violence. These principals allowed us to view witchcraft related violence as an expression of a gendered relation that is powered.

Reliability

We draw on Neuendorf's (2002) suggestion that intercoder reliability is essential when human coding is employed. To this end then, the supervisor of the study served the role of second coder. This enabled for the themes that were identified by the first researcher to be confirmed, refined and challenged. Because the codes that were essential to the current study are descriptive in nature (a basic count of certain variables, like gender and type of violence), it was not deemed essential to conduct further tests for reliability (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are combined, under three sections: (i) types of violent consequences faced by persons accused of witchcraft; (ii) witchcraft accusations, gender-based violence and feminist psychological understanding and; (iii) witchcraft accusations, media and feminist psychological implications.

Types of violent consequences faced by persons accused of witchcraft

It is essential that an understanding of the type of violence associated with witchcraft accusations is gained. This allows us to establish the severity of the consequences faced by those accused of witchcraft in South Africa as well as to examine the implications thereof. It

is important to note that the number of news reports indicating a particular type of violence was counted, not number of persons. Thus, if the news report indicated stoning, it was counted as 1, not aligned to the number of people that were stoned. The aim was simply to highlight the types of violence that victims accused of witchcraft face. The analysis of the 114 newspaper reports appear in the table below:
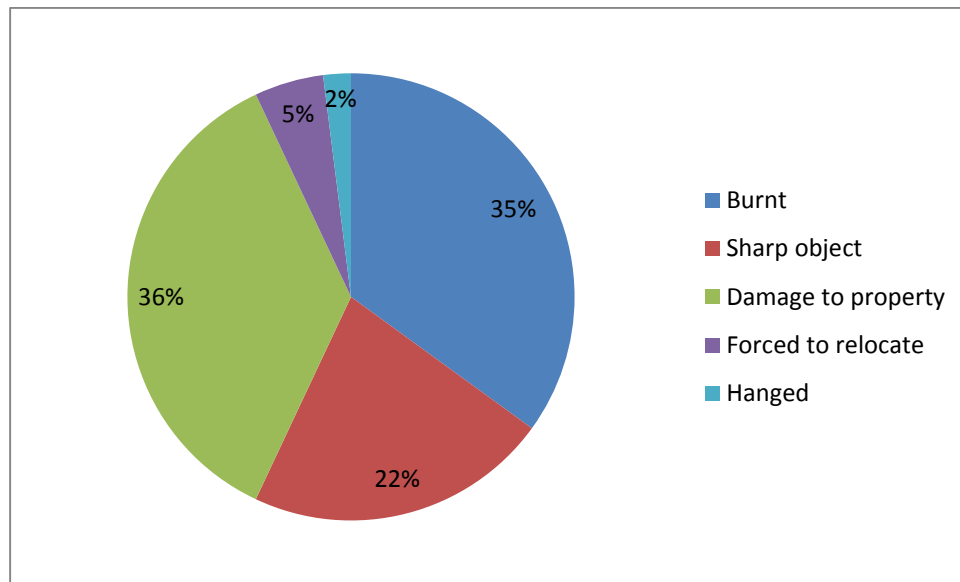

Table 1: Violence associated with witchcraft accusations in South Africa

The analysis showed that witchcraft accusations resulted in violence against the accused. Damage to property, burning, beating and being forced to relocate were consequences identified from the news reports. A review of the literature on witch-hunts indicates similarity of consequences (Briggs, 2002; Roy, 1998; Minnaar, Wentzel & Payze, 1998). Of importance to note here, is that these forms of violence manifested in some deaths, but not all. This links to Minnaar, Wentzel & Payze's (1998) study which indicates that violence against the accused witch manifests in lethal terms.

Understanding that individuals accused of witchcraft in South Africa face violent consequences we can now attempt to understand what this violence represents with a particular focus on gendered relations.

Witchcraft accusations, gender based violence and feminist psychological understanding

This section is divided into two parts, (a) the gender of the accused and gender based violence, (b) witchcraft accusations and feminist psychological understanding.

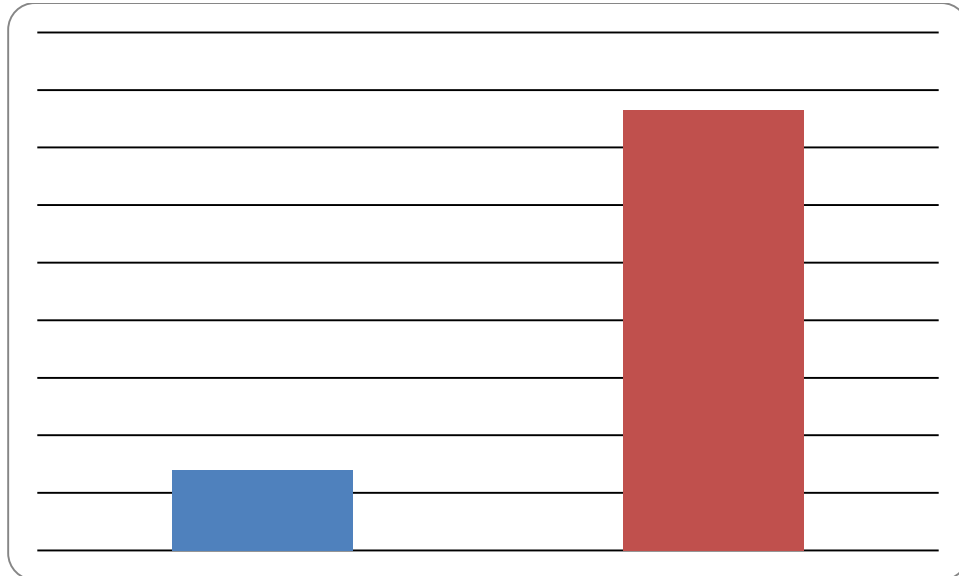The table below depicts the number of men and women who were accused of witchcraft in the news reports.

Table 2: Number of men and women accused of witchcraft

It is evident that even though men (28 in total) were accused, women were the main targets of witchcraft accusations. In the 114 reports, 153 women, the majority of whom were elderly, were accused and faced violent consequences. Generally, it appears that whereas older women were accused and victimized, young people and men were the accusers and perpetrators of the violence. Thus the association of women and witch seen in the news reports analysed reflects the historical gendered portrayal of the witch (Salmon, 1989; de Blecourt, 2000).

Researchers indicate that older women are easy targets of witch-hunts because, for a number of reasons, they are assumed to be responsible for the 'misfortune' experienced by neighbours, family members and care-givers (Adinkrah, 2004; Briggs, 2002; Roy, 1998). This misfortune may be death, damage to property or even business misfortune. To highlight this from the news reports analysed, Muluadzi (1999) reported in the City Press that a Granny aged 70, was accused of witchcraft. Although she was saved, her home and belongings were torched by a mob of about 200 people. In another instant, a 46 year old woman, was slain after she was accused of causing the death of a 14 year old girl (Kweza, 1994). These examples highlight a trend found in the news reports; accusations were made against women who were believed to have caused personal loss or misfortune.

With the understanding that many more women than men are reported as perpetrators of witchcraft in South Africa, as well as the misfortune they are believed to cause we must consider the gendered implication posed by this. What becomes apparent is that witchcraft accusations and its violent consequences may be an expression of gender based violence, or violence against women.

Gender based violence, witchcraft accusations and feminist psychological understanding

If we align witchcraft accusations and its associated violent consequences with the definitions of violence provided by Moreno et al (2005), expressions of witchcraft violence become tangible. Moreno et al (2005) said, violence against women includes behaviours directed at them that result in physical and emotional harm, even death. We are also informed by Martin et al. (2002) that within certain cultures and traditions, violence faced by women may not be termed as such, based on the ways in which it is justified. For example, Boonzaier (2008) says that men discuss their violence against females as an enforcement of the patriarchal masculinity narrative. Thus, even though we treat witchcraft accusations as an expression of gender based violence, we state that it must serve a particular purpose.

It follows that witchcraft accusations work parallel to gender relations and in essence restore a socio-cultural order. The socio-cultural order is reflective of the domination of men in all sectors of society. Although it is acknowledged by feminists that patriarchy is not the only motivating influence on the expression of violence (Crawford & Unger, 2008), we must state that as an ideology, patriarchy is present everywhere. Culture, sex and even age are cited as factors that may influence expressions of violence against women, essentially have remnants of patriarchy embedded.

On the basis of factors like culture, sex and age functioning alongside patriarchy suggests to us that violence women face from men is influenced by the socialisation of gender roles and power. This has been aptly demonstrated in studies conducted within the South African context (Shefer, Strebel & Foster, 2000; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2003; Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006). These are some of the studies that indicate to us that violence against women may function as an attempt from men to (re) establish a powered relationship, that favours men and which places women as actors to masculine power. Violence against women may thus serve the purpose of reproducing a gendered relation that is structured by patriarchal ideology.

In this section, we have established that witchcraft accusations and the violence associated with it represent an expression of gender based violence. The specific aim of witchcraft accusations, is to (re) establish a gendered power relation between men and women which is structured by a patriarchal ideology. The following section applies this understanding to the news reports that were analysed.

Witchcraft accusations, media and feminist psychological implications

Shufelt (2007) has provided us with a stereotypical account of witches that seems to be portrayed through media reports, films, pictures and the like. Of interest to us is that most people would agree with the stereotyped perception of witches provided by media and to an extent hold views that see the terms 'witchcraft' and 'witch' as associated with 'women'. As was shown earlier, women constitute the majority of these accusations of witchcraft.

Bearing in mind that women are the primary targets of witchcraft accusations, we consider that news reports with headlines like: *"women hacked, burnt to death for being 'witches'"* provides the reader with further gender stereotyping description of women and witchcraft. These descriptions, which present sensational and riveting accounts of the supernatural, take the focus away from the description of violence against women accused of witchcraft (Beaver, 1995;). In fact, even in news reports where the headline did not indicate a specific gender for witchcraft like, *"The witches of Jo'burg" "Burnt alive for being a witch",* the content and description in the report about the accused and their 'crimes', were in most cases a description of women (Makhaye, 2007; Magardie, 1999).

To accentuate, we draw on an article by Khupiso (1994), who informs us that *"a man at a local shebeen told patrons that he met a woman who had died recently after a long illness. She told him that she had been bewitched by three women, whom she identified".* Taking this as evidence of witchcraft, the man at the local shebeen, together with other community members, hacked the 'identified' and 'guilty' women to death. Adding to media's sensational attitude when reporting witchcraft violence, a number of reports focused on animals. Two of these reports, "*Monkey scares village*" and *"witch chickens cause flutter"* are examples of stories that involve the alleged use of animals by witches to bring harm to individuals and communities (Hlatshwayo, 2004; Lubisi, 2004). In a similar report entitled "*bewitched rooster*", an accused witch was hung from a tree in a graveyard for bewitching roosters to peck people. After being pecked by these roosters which belonged to the deceased, the victims fell ill (Kuhlase, 2000).

The sensational focus of witchcraft associated with evil animals and women with supernatural abilities firstly, draws the reader's attention towards witchcraft as it makes for an interesting read. However, the media reports analysed focused less attention on gendered violence and more attention to the riveting accounts of people having to protect themselves from the evil of witchcraft. In this way, a message is portrayed – that the violence faced by accused witches is justified as a necessity to protect the individual, family and the community at large. In the article written by Khupiso (1994) for example, the 'identified' and 'guilty' woman was killed, but the focus in the report is not entirely placed around this murder. Rather, the murder is reported in a way that tells the reader that justice was served and that the witch was appropriately punished for her crime. As was said earlier due to the malevolence associated with witchcraft, witches are feared as they are thought to affect or have the capacity to cause misfortune to property, health, wealth, psychological functioning and even beauty (Ivery & Myers, 2007; Levack, 1995).

The current analysis of newspaper reports in South Africa also established a relationship between accusations of witchcraft and the experience of psychological troubles and social misfortunes. In the reports analysed, a woman was accused because "*she had bewitched my mother*" (Nichols, 1995); or "*she was keeping a dead girl as a zombie*" (Khupiso, 1993); or "*she caused the death of a local headman who die[d] after an illness*" (Lubisis, 2001).

The fear men (and some women) have about witches, places other women in a position of power – because they are believed to have the capacity of witchcraft. Given that one who is in control of supernatural forces (the witch) can bring misfortunes, it follows that those who believe in the existence of the craft will also be afraid of bewitchment. In light of the misfortunes bewitchment is believed to cause, women associated with witchcraft are feared for this power, which is a supernatural and destructive force they are believed to have within them.

Research indicates an association between masculinity and power (Winter, 2000) and it follows, that power is not meant to be held by women – in any form. The trouble of power and women has also been suggested by Boonzaier (2007), whose research informs us that through violence men attempt to establish their control over women.

Anastasio and Costa's (2004) study suggests that gendered stereotypes may be a way in which the news reproduces male supremacy. News reports on witchcraft focus attention more so on the association between witchcraft, evil and women and in so doing posits the perpetrators of the violence as victims. Meyer (1997) accentuates this idea. The manner in which violence

against women is reported may position the victim as the perpetrator. The blame for the abuse – carried by women – Meyer (1997) states, reinforces certain stereotypes and myths, which hold women as responsible for the violence they face in intimate spaces. Thus it follows that due to the malevolence and destruction witches (women) cause, the violence they face, is reported in media as a necessity to protect oneself and others from bewitchment.

Radebe's (2007) report on a witch 'hitman' demonstrates the need to protect oneself from bewitchment. In Pietermaritzburg a 30 year-old man was sentenced to life imprisonment after he murdered a female. The imprisonment of the murderer came about after being requested by an aunt who believed the deceased bewitched his entire family. The Judge in the case stated *"...since he [30 year old man] was not the one being bewitched, he killed simply for the money"* (Radebe, 2007). It follows that if the man was bewitched, he may have been treated differently, in terms of his motives, as he may have been a victim.

In other instances, sentences that did not match the severity of the crime were reported. For example, in December of 2005 two men who admitted to killing Alice Mamtshulu Mntungwa because they thought she was a witch received 15-year sentences. The article reported that *"Judge Vuka Tshabalala said that because Siphele Jobe Sithole and his friend Thokoza Mvelase are from a rural background and genuinely believed that the elderly woman was a witch, they deserve a lesser sentence of 15 years' imprisonment, instead of life"* (Seabi, 2005). The reporting of the murder case, frames bewitchment as a legitimate motive when a sentence for what should be considered only as murder is given. This mitigating factor in essence positions those women who are accused of witchcraft in a vulnerable position as perpetrators of the violence they face in relation to those who commit the crime. These perpetrators, who in most cases are men, are treated as victims.

The above case accentuates what we believe, that the news reporting on witchcraft violence does not focus on the actual issue at hand - violence against women accused of witchcraft - but rather, the sensational idea of the existence of a supernatural being able to cause destruction or the belief in witchcraft. The media reports create sympathy for the perpetrators of the violence, who acted as such on the basis of survival. It follows, then, that in order to contain the destructive force (witchcraft and its associated harm) and protect oneself and the community, the witch must be removed. Violence against those women accused of witchcraft represents this attempt. And in so doing, the perpetuation of an ideology that favours men is (re) established.

Literature tells us that within cultures and traditions which value male supremacy, a transgression of gender roles manifests in violence against women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Richie & Kanuha, 1997; White & Kowalski, 1996; Wood, 2001). Linking to the news reports on witchcraft related violence, it follows that witches (and therefore women) are perceived as being powerful, through witchery; and women are not meant to be in a position of power, especially within contexts where patriarchal ideology exists. By framing the reports in ways that focus on witchcraft, rather than violence against women media may be entrenching the male dominated status quo (Meyers, 1997). Thus, the focus within the reports on the sensational and not on violence against the women may serve the purpose of (re) producing an order where men are seen as victims and not perpetrators; and where women are blamed for the violence they face. Instead, the reader is drawn into a world that is magical, dangerous and controlled by women. Consequently, this impedes violence prevention interventions focusing on gender based violence.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored reports of witchcraft-related violence in South African news reports. It was established that these reports promote gender stereotypes and associations about women – evil – witchcraft. By underplaying the violence faced by those accused of witchcraft and focusing on the justifications provided by the perpetrators of the acts, the emphasis is removed from gender based violence. Inevitably the fear of the witch (women) is instilled and in so doing, posits violence against women as the solution.

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CHAPTER 3:

AN EXPLORATION OF BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT IN A SAMPLE OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS: A FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

Y Ally

This paper explores beliefs about witchcraft in a sample of community members. We argue that witchcraft beliefs are imbued with gender stereotypes that manifest in a negative view of women. These stereotypes are most evident with witchcraft's associated violent consequences that affect the lives of more women than men. Witchcraft accusations may thus feed into an under-explored facet of violence against women, we argue, and to this end we apply feminist psychological theory to analyse the gendered implications of witchcraft beliefs. Interviews with community members in South Africa provide us with a context to apply feminist discourse analysis to comment on the implication of the association of witchcraft with women. Our aim is to show how witchcraft beliefs are fused with gender, influencing the expression of violence against women.

Keywords: witchcraft; witchcraft accusations; violence; community psychology; feminist psychology; feminism

INTRODUCTION

There is an acknowledgement in the understanding of violence against women[1], to address different expressions thereof. Understanding these expressions of violence against women is even more urgent in light of the fact that they do not receive the necessary attention. The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon (2006) informs us that *"violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence – yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned"*. According to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women of 1993 (A/RES/48/104), violence against women may be defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. The same definition was affirmed at the Beijing Platform of Action of 1995, which further delineated the categories of family, community and state violence but specifically included female genital mutilation, dowry-related violence, and other traditional practices harmful to women.

In light of these definitions of violence against women, acknowledging that violence women face takes on different expressions, it can be stated that there is an urgent need to address different expressions of violence against women in South Africa. An example of the different expression of violence against women in South Africa is witchcraft accusations which affect the lives of many women and some men (Stark, 2003; Leff, Fontleve & Martin, 2008). Although it is assumed in many parts of the world that witchcraft beliefs have given way to westernisation in Sub-Saharan Africa, the belief in witchcraft is widely held still (Miguel, 2005). Serving a variety of purposes, belief in witchcraft and the supernatural has shown no tendency to lose its salience (Moore & Sanders, 2001). Of course, in contexts where belief regarding these religio-cultural expressions abound people are unlikely to acknowledge these violent encounters women experience as violence (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker & Ghachem, 2003). Rather, it will be framed in a manner that perpetuates its existence, need and expression. Ultimately, this indicates understanding the role such beliefs serve within these contexts.

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[1] In this paper, we use the terms violence against women and gender-based violence interchangeably.

The violence associated with witchcraft, described in various texts (Briggs, 2002; Levack, 1995; Barstow, 1995; Stark, 2003) found expression in a video that was anonymously sent to the researcher (unknown author, witchcraft-related violence, video, 2009). This video showed a group of people, chanting and screaming while a fire burnt in broad day light. Images from the video appear below:

The chanting and screaming of the group were foreshadowed by the screams of accused 'witches' burning (Unknown Author, witchcraft-related violence, 2009). These persons, tried fleeing the violence, but individual members from the group kept kicking them and dragging them back into the fire. One man from the group runs and kicks one of the accused - already burning in the fire – in the back while another man, having cut a thick branch from a tree, beats another accused repeatedly and severely all over the body and head. The end result of a witch-hunt is death, evidenced graphically in a picture below.

The video and pictures obtained alludes to two important points. Firstly, violence is the outcome faced by those accused of witchcraft. This simple deduction has seen to the persecution of many people throughout history (Burne, 1914; Maxwell-Stuart, 2005), in some of the most brutal expressions known to man.

The second consideration stemming from the video and pictures and also documented in witchcraft texts, is that the violence faced by the accused is group-based. Rose (1982) for example, supports this, indicating that the threat posed by 'evil-doers' like witches creates the condition to mobilize an 'effective collective action against a group of such enemies' (pg. 142). Indicative from this, is that despite the possibility of a strained interpersonal context, giving

rise to the accusation; once this has been levelled, the fear of witchcraft which stems from belief of witchcraft as responsible for harm and destruction, misfortune and illness, mobilises a community to protect itself from potential harm.

Baroja (1964) supporting the notion of belief in witchcraft and the supernatural states that "much more is known about witchcraft from the point of view of those who believe in witches… and we have to analyse the mentalities of … whole communities gripped by a specific fear…". Webster's (1932) view accentuates on the belief in witchcraft in South Africa and he says, "no one" in his senses "dreams of doubting its [witchcrafts] tremendous power". Implicit to Webster's (1932) and Baroja's (1964) understandings, is that witchcraft must be understood from within the reality of those who believe in it.

The understanding of the belief in witchcraft and the supernatural becomes even more urgent in light of the violent consequences faced by those accused of witchcraft. In evaluating the 17th - 18th century witch hunts in Europe and America (Evans-Pritchard, 1931; Harwood, 1970; Larner, 1974), as well as recent studies in South Africa (Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998), it became clear that witchcraft accusations manifest mostly in violent consequences. From burning to drowning, stoning, hacking and even being purged, those accused of witchcraft meet with torture and death (Stark, 2003; Briggs, 2002; Roy, 1998; Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998; Hole, 1914).

In this paper, we locate witchcraft beliefs from within the reality and perspectives provided by community members in South Africa. Insight to how witchcraft is understood within a particular reality which justifies the violence faced by those accused of the craft will thus be gained. Further located within a feminist psychological framework, the gendered implications posed by witchcraft beliefs within these contexts will be explored. We conclude with suggestions for violence prevention interventions for witchcraft-related violence, as it is a continued reality within some South African communities. The following section explores the belief in witchcraft.

THE BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT

Any investigation of witchcraft must consider its origins. Many religions and various cultures incorporate supernatural beliefs like spirit possession, the Devil, angels and of course witchcraft (Abdussalam-Bali, 2004; Ashour, 1993; Dein, 2003; Eldam, 2003; Stafford, 2005). Many African cultures and religions believe in supernatural forces too, including spells,

invisible forces, ancestral spirits and *ditlhare*, *moriane* or *umuti* (meaning medicine with magical powers) (Ivey & Myers, 2008a; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003; Mkhize, 2004). These beliefs in supernatural forces become a part of the everyday worldviews held by an individual or a community. Swartz (2002) says that the belief in supernatural entities stemming from religious or cultural texts and unwritten stories, are transposed to the relations people forge with others and provides one with a model of health, illness and misfortune. Fortes (1953) contended that witchcraft is an ideology for daily living. The belief in witchcraft thus derives its existence from religious and cultural systems that allow for the larger belief in the influence from supernatural entities.

To simplify the understanding of witchcraft[2], which is dense, we categorise it into three types.

The first type of witchcraft refers to the capacity of some individuals to manipulate objects in nature as well as through incantations, charms and spells to harm others. Larner (1974) informs us that this form of witchcraft is released through power activated by hatred. Interpersonal quarrels, jealousy at the success of others and even beauty may thus be motivating factors to harm another person (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Glickman, 1944; Fortes, 1953).

The second type of witchcraft is steeped in a religious tradition; where a pact is taken with the Devil or Satan, a Christian fallen angel associated with evil. Here, witches, the users of witchcraft, are believed to engage in sexual relations with the Devil in exchange for supernatural powers, which they use to harm their enemies (Heinemann, 2000; Parrinder, 1963).

The third type of witchcraft, very similar to the first is reflective of a community of evil. In this community, witches share common goals, assist each other in harming enemies and even combining forces to harm others (Levack, 1995; Luhrmann, 1994). Implicit to the third type of witchcraft is that witches form a cult and can teach their children the art of magic (Briggs, 2002). Based on these definitions, it seems that the belief in witchcraft is more often characterized by fantasy and the supernatural.

In accordance with the three categories defined above, witches are believed to have the capacity to fly at night and to transform themselves into animals of their choice (Burne, 1914; Hole, 1939; Joshi, 2000). They are believed to behave in eerie ways, and with their fierce stares

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[2] We have excluded those definitions of 'white' witchcraft, considered the binary opposite of 'black' witchcraft. White witchcraft has the capacity to allow for a bewitched person to be cured (See, Levack, 1995; Briggs, 2002; Barstow, 1996). Our exclusion is based on focusing our aim on those connotations of witchcraft which may feed into violence.

enable to bring bad luck, pain and other undesirable consequences on others (Igwe, 2004; Evans-Pritchard, 1937). Bodin (1596), a French demonologist, famous for his witch hunting guide said that witches promised Satan babies still in the womb, drank human blood, and ate human flesh. Witches themselves are also fantastically associated with flying, attending witches meetings in the nude, shape-shifting and terrifying their enemies (Simmons, 1980). Physiologically, for example, witches can cause loss of hearing, speech and sight; loss of memory; terrifying hallucinations and even actual markings, sores and bruises on the skin; sickness, illness and even death (Briggs, 2002; Hansen, 1969).

In South Africa, witches, commonly referred to in seSotho as *baloi* (plural) or *moloi* (singular) or in isiZulu as *umthakathi* (singular) or *abathakati* (plural)*,* use magic potions known as *korobela,* which can cause a person to fall in love, regardless of their own true inclinations; while *intelezi*, can cause a person to become violent (Ashforth 2000). *Isidliso* is also thought to wreak all sorts of social misfortunes and divorce, unemployment, unpopularity, family conflict, as well as physical illness and death are regarded within the domain of the witches' capacity. In fact, HIV/AIDS is also viewed as a manifestation of bewitchment in South Africa and other African countries, like Zimbabwe (Van Dyk, 2001; Andersson, 2002).The notion of "zombies", or people controlled by a witch to do their evil, is also widespread in contemporary South Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Niehaus 2000). Another closely linked phenomenon, is the belief in the *tokoloshe*. The *tokoloshe* created by witches, is believed to have the capacity to cause illness and death on the command of the witch (McNab, 2007). Peltzer (2003) for example, explored taxi-drivers perceptions of the causes of accidents and the *tokoloshe*, sent by witches was cited as a dominant factor.

On the basis of these descriptions, witchcraft seems to represent a theory of misfortune. This theory of misfortune guides the interactions between people and provides them with explanations, steeped in the supernatural, for almost every misfortune. Evans-Pritchard (1937) supports this by his indication that witchcraft may be drawn upon as an explanatory frame in light of what may be considered by the person as undeserved misfortunes. Regardless though, of the role witchcraft may play in deflecting responsibility for misfortunes, the capacity witchcraft is believed to possess, manifests in a sense of fear.

As supported by Webster (1932), we understand that in communities where witchcraft beliefs abound, "a man is likely to die if he believes himself bewitched … the man may be strong and healthy; nevertheless he falls into a decline and soon expires…" (p. 486). Morton-Williams

(1960) alludes to this point and informs us that the Yoruba admit they fear witchcraft more than anything else as it is believed to be the most frequent cause of death. Olliver (1928) states that witches are "believed to haunt and worry their victims in their own homes, though they remained invisible and were in reality found asleep in their own beds when investigations were made" (p. 117). Hansen (1969, p. 11) explicitly indicates that the hysterical symptoms presented by victims of witchcraft "was not witchcraft itself but the victim's fear of it".

In light of this, it follows that fear is embedded in the belief in witchcraft, as it contains supernatural power to negatively influence any aspect of one's life. This is an important consideration, given that the fear of witchcraft may be a strong motivating factor that contributes to the violent consequences associated with such accusations. The model below accentuates on the role fear of bewitchment plays in the expression of witchcraft-related violence.

This working model is centred on the belief in witchcraft, stemming from religious and cultural belief systems. We argue that religio-cultural belief systems provide an individual with a world-view that guides behaviour, relationships and beliefs (Swartz, 2002). These belief systems, which incorporate the belief in witchcraft, provide an individual with an understanding of witchcraft, its capacity and capability. Mostly, this reality sees to witchcraft capable of causing harm, destruction and havoc in almost every aspect of one's life. With the centrality these beliefs play in formulating a reality to function within, it is unlikely that witchcraft suspicions will be treated lightly. In light of this, we theorise that witchcraft beliefs manifest in a fear of bewitchment. The experience of misfortune (illness, death, loss), manifests in witchcraft becoming the primary suspect. This serves the purpose of allowing a person to rely on a religio-cultural belief to explain his or her experience.

Religion, Culture and Witchcraft Beliefs

Witchcraft capacity and influence in life

Fear of Bewitchment

Experience of misfortune
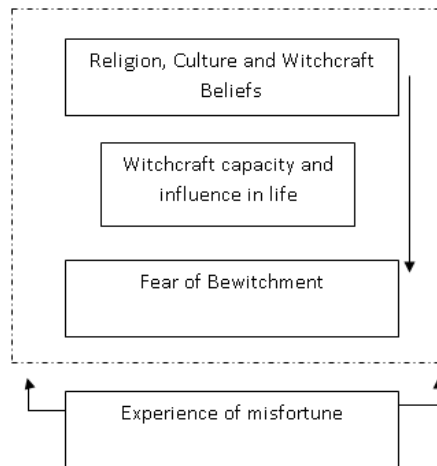
Model 1: The Fear of Bewitchment

In this model, we therefore note that the ability to manipulate supernatural forces and elements within nature to harm others in almost every way, positions witchcraft as an entity to be feared. In contexts where the belief in witchcraft permeates, it follows that the fear of bewitchment grips the community and forces them into a position of violence. This is logical when contextualised, as the removal of the witch is considered the only means of eradicating the threat posed. According to Briggs (2002) and Stark (2003), violence is considered an appropriate treatment for witchcraft given that those who utilise its capacity are believed to be evil and troublesome. Tangherlini (2000) alludes to the violent consequences faced by accused witches by saying, that witches are terrifying and menacing, wreaking economic and physical havoc. Having established that witchcraft accusations and its associated violent reactions and consequences are fear-based, we now focus on the violence faced by the accused.

This section explored the belief in witchcraft and elaborated on the fear of bewitchment, considered an important precondition to the violent reactions adopted by communities in seeking justice. The image of the witch has come to be associated with certain persons and these particular personas face the violent consequences thereof. The section below, explores the gender of witchcraft.

THE GENDER OF WITCHCRAFT

Historically, the label of witchcraft has been associated with women. We specifically draw on the work of Sprenger and Institori who in 1486 wrote the most followed manual for hunting witches during the European Inquisitions (Broedel, 2003). The *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of Witches*) was the earliest and most utilised manual, translated into various languages and spread throughout Europe, influencing witch-hunts for almost 200 years. As such, the

depictions of witchcraft in this text would influence the perceptions of many (Broedel, 2003). Clark (1991) supports the notion that witchcraft was gendered and informs us that the early notion of witchcraft embraced the idea that gender traits made women more likely perpetrators and that accusations of witchcraft entailed a negative view of women.

The authors of the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* specified that "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable…wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils" (Broedel, 2003). Although it is acknowledged within the manual that both men and women may be witches, women were considered more likely candidates than men. Several reasons were provided by the authors for the likelihood of women to be witches and included: the female sex is more concerned with things of the flesh than men; formed from a man's rib they are only imperfect animals and man belong to a privileged sex from whose midst Christ emerged.

As priests in the Dominican order, Sprenger and Institori (1486) demonstrated that the most effective tactic employed by the Christian Church was demonizing pre-Christian Gods and associating such worship with the Devil (Broedel, 2003). Typically, women were associated with Devil worshipping as their pagan traditions included dancing in the moonlight and a strong reliance on natural elements found in nature (Stark, 2003). Christian belief therefore, was used as a means to gain power at a time when monotheism was emerging as a belief in Europe (Stark, 2003). Gage's (1893) publication, *Woman, Church and State*, claims at some point in humanity, societies were matriarchal, the opposite to what is proposed in monotheistic thinking and that the witches of the witch cult had been pagan priestesses preserving this religion.

As such the image of witchcraft was feminised from the early onset of witch-hunting. We gain further insight to the gendering of witchcraft through ancient and medieval paintings and portrayals.

| Image A | Image B | Image C |

The creation of women as vulnerable to the deception of the Devil by Sprenger and Institori's (1486) manual began finding expression in depictions of witchcraft, indicating its influence on the perception and capacity of women. In image A, by Ulrich Molitor (1489), the Devil seduces a woman into making a pact with him. Hans Baldung Grien (Image B) depicts witches as old and young *women* playing games. The portrait by Francisco de Goya (1799) (image C) focuses on the relationship between an older and a younger woman. This relationship is embedded, supernaturally as they are flying on a broomstick. According to Barstow (1995, p. 56), "this is a late example of the popular imagery that effectively fuelled negative public opinion towards women throughout the witch craze". The depiction of women as witches extends to the capacity they were believed to possess.

In the images below we note that witches or women were seen responsible for an array of misfortunes.

Image D   Image E   Image F   Image G

The sixteenth-century depiction of the death of a man by witchcraft alludes to the developing association of women with the capacity to cause harm, havoc and destruction (Image D). This capacity is also seen in images E, F and G, where women consort with the Devil or conjure a magical potion. Image G in particular depicts the Devil receiving gifts (babies) from witches. Contemporary images of witches too, succumb to the gendering of the craft. Portrayals of witchcraft continue representing images of witches as women, seen below.

Image H   Image I   Image J

In contrast to the depiction of women as hagged, old and terrifying, modern depictions are ordinary looking women but still capable of causing havoc and harm through their supernatural capabilities. Helena Bonham Carter's role as *Bellatrix LeStrange*, an evil witch from the worldwide sensation, Harry Potter provides the viewer with a portrayal of witchcraft that is evil. Sabrina the teenage witch on the contrast represents a female witch who is good −

despite her capacity to utilise magical potions and spells. In the film, Practical Magic, Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman portray witches who use magical spells to gain love and the love of their community. Albeit the image of the witch assuming a more contemporary look, the characteristics associated with witchcraft is relatively unchanged from earlier depictions. Women as witches are essentially believed to be responsible for an array of experiences, aided by the Devil, potions and spells.

Women are also portrayed in witch-hunts. These paintings below and depictions below, both historic and contemporary, are important as they depict the manner witches should be treated. Images K, L and M provide one with a visual depiction of the consequences for witchcraft. Typically, these depictions from early times, demonstrate women being burnt, arrested, tortured or hanged for witchcraft. In the same images (K, L & M), one notices that men surround the accused witch and are responsible for the violent attacks against her. Image N (Hansel and Gretel) shows a modern depiction of witchcraft violence. In the film, season of the witch, starring Nicolas Cage, an accused woman is transported away from the town in question by armed men in an attempt to prevent her from causing more illness and disease. As the film progresses, the female character displays 'questionable' behaviour, as she is held responsible for the difficulties the armed men face in having her transported to a coven of priests who will 'cure' her.

    Image K   Image L   Image M   Image N

From the very onset of witch-hunting and extending to current realities, it seems that women were and still are positioned as witches; and by virtue of this positioning within society, attract witchcraft accusations (Adinkrah, 2004; Bass, 1976; Briggs, 2002; de Blecourt, 2000; Griffin, 1995; Jackson, 1995; Minnaar, Wentzel & Payze, 1998;). Thus, young, old, beautiful, ugly, famous, rich, poor *women* are likely victims of witchcraft accusations. This association leads us to believe that witchcraft accusations may be interpreted and understood in ways that feed certain stereotypes, fulfil (hidden) motives and ultimately (re) establishes a gendered relation

favouring men. Building on this, we argue that witchcraft accusations represent an expression of gendered violence.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND WITCHCRAFT-RELATED VIOLENCE

Violence against women may be framed in ways that justify its expression. Even though intimate-partner violence and sexual coercion are the most 'common' types of violence affecting women and girls, in many parts of the world violence takes on special characteristics according to cultural and historical conditions (Morena, Jansen, Ellsberg, Helse & Watts, 2005). We argue that witchcraft-related violence is an expression of violence against women, embedded within specific religious and cultural conditions. Framing witchcraft violence under the unitary category 'violence against women' takes cognisance of an under-represented expression of violence against women.

Feminists argue that violence against women aids the maintenance of male domination. Even though multiple factors influence the expression of violence, feminists argue that the perceived dominance of males over females underpins most of this experience. Crawford & Unger (2004) state that historically and aligned to socio-cultural traditions, women and children are considered weaker and passive and should depend on men. As Dobash and Dobash (1979) put it, "Men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society – aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination – and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance" (p. 24). Thus, patriarchal ideals, which serve to accentuate the position of men over women, must be seriously inducted as an inclusive factor in any investigation of gendered violence. This is not saying that other factors must be excluded, as this implies overlooking the intersection of factors that may contribute to the experience of gendered violence (Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006). It suggests that an acknowledgement of these factors must not side-line the central role of patriarchy on women's violence. As Kowalski (1998) proposed, patriarchy affects the power dynamics in all relationships. It thus becomes imperative to explore gendered violence as a problem fundamentally influenced by gender and power but nested within a broader context characterised by other systems of domination and inequity (Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006).

Feminist psychologists have been cognisant of this and argue that one must consider the gender power differential. They indicate that violence against women may be an expression of a

particular gender relationship which powers men and further silences women (Shefer, Boonzaier and Kiguwa, 2006). Jewkes (2002) for example accentuates that societies with stronger ideologies of male dominance may experience more intimate partner violence. Essentially these studies allude to the role violence plays in (re) establishing a gender relationship that favours men (Wood, 2001; Richie & Kanuha, 1997).

This understanding applies to witchcraft accusations as well. Given that women are (mostly) associated with the category 'witch'; and that women (mostly) face the violent consequences of these accusations – we must consider that a gender power differential may be functional. Witchcraft accusations thus, may not represent a threat by deviant women per se; rather the association of witchcraft with women may be a structural expression of gender inequality that feeds gender-based violence. These accusations may be utilised as a means to reproduce a gender order that supports the notion of women as submissive to men. As Connell (1995 p 83) observes: "patriarchal definitions of femininity amount to a cultural disarmament that may be quite a physical kind." He further notes that two patterns of violence against women follow from this situation: violence as a means of sustaining dominance and violence as a way of claiming or asserting masculinity. Similarly, we say that by virtue of their positioning in relation to others, women accused of witchcraft are marginalised and treated accordingly and in so doing, a (re) establishment of a social structure that favours men will be (re) gained. The following section briefly describes the implication of this for witchcraft-related violence prevention interventions.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS

Violence prevention interventions specific to witchcraft accusations in South Africa are rare (SAPRA, 2000-2012). This is not too much of a surprise, even in light of the increasing reports of witchcraft violence in various communities. One may consider that this silencing of gender-based violence is located in the fact that the belief cuts through every element of African life. For example, Fisiy & Geschiere (1991) indicate that witchcraft is at the centre of politics. This thought links to the fact that in South Africa, politicians, whose views hold sway over the masses, have indicated the use witchcraft to maintain power (Kgosana, 2009; Petrus, 2012). The implication of this is that the belief which penetrates all elements of social and private life is being given added strength and this gives power to the fear of bewitchment.

Therefore, rather than a focus on the issue itself – violence against women – focus is given to the extraordinary, supernatural and 'evil' capacity inherent in women. It suffices then, that any

intervention aimed at addressing this expression of violence against women, must be located within the context of such belief. Crawford and Unger (2000) indicate that acknowledging, framing and contextualising violence against women allows for a redistribution of understanding the phenomenon and is the first step to changing the problem.

A lack of such understanding may manifest in outlandish ideas and actions. For example, The Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Act in South Africa calls for an end to the belief in witchcraft (2007). One has to consider if a belief in an entity – whatever the belief – may be eradicated from one's life. Thus, the call to an end for witchcraft belief implies not understanding the function the belief serves and takes away the impetus of a focus on the problem itself – the interpretation of beliefs. These interpretations are important as they feed into the notion of gender-based violence.

In this paper, we explore community members understanding of witchcraft, with a view to analysing the reasons why they may motivate for violence against witchcraft accused. We locate this understanding from within a gendered framework, drawing on feminist psychological studies to comment on the implication of witchcraft beliefs and its association with women on the expression of violence against women.

METHODOLOGY:

This paper explores community member's perceptions of witchcraft with a view to analysing the gendered implications these beliefs pose. To achieve this, we employed the qualitative research paradigm. According to Berger and Luckman (1967), qualitative research may be deemed most appropriate when attempting to study people. They argue against a positivist tradition and inform us that the interpretation people attach to social life can be adequately captured through qualitative research as it has at its central tenet, the attempt to understand human subjective meanings and interpretations. Banyard and Miller (1998) state that qualitative methods are a powerful set of tools enabling researchers to understand the subjective meanings people make of their experiences and that gives rise to specific behaviours. Given this and in light of our aims, the qualitative approach is best suited to gather the depth of understanding needed from the participants.

Sample

In total, 29 participants took part in the study. Three focus group discussions were conducted. These groups comprised of 12, 4 and 6 people. The numbers in the groups were not planned

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but rather, developed as participants invited other participants. This snowball sampling effect resulted in 22 participants in three focus group discussions. Additionally, seven non-structured conversations were held with individual community members. Non-structured conversations were chosen as the data collection tool, given that the information being collected was considered sensitive by some community members. Before this decision was undertaken, a structured conversation was held. In this conversation the participant was not forthcoming with information regarding witchcraft. Rather, there was a conflicting debate that developed between the participant and the researcher. In order to avoid risk of danger to the researcher and to the participants, a decision was made to keep the conversations open with participants and to launch discussions into witchcraft. This applied to both the non-structured conversations and the focus groups.

Demographics

Some of the participants were not open to provide me with demographic information. Participants believed that witches were able to listen to their conversations with me. As a consequent to this, they refused to participate in the study if demographic information was a requirement. Although some participants did not present this fear, demographic data was not collected as asking participants their age seemed to cause significant levels of discomfort in light of the topic. For example, one participant who provided the relevant demographics became agitated when witchcraft was introduced to the conversation and questions around it began emerging. A decision was taken to prevent participants from not providing information required or from exiting the conversation.

All participants were either employed in the formal (domestic; office workers) or informal sectors (street vendors). 13 females and 16 males comprised the sample. The researcher attempted to engage with both males and females in order to maintain representation. Age was not collected as described above as participants were reluctant to provide personal information due to the fear of witchcraft.

Participants were approached by informants on behalf of the researcher. These informants were colleagues and given that the researcher is a) not from the communities in questions and b) a different racial group; community members would have been apprehensive in participating in the study if informants were not employed. The informants provided a context for the study and in many senses, a sense of safety to participate.

The researcher aimed to understand the belief in witchcraft held by community members. Therefore inclusion in the study was not based on any particular community characteristics. Essentially, participants needed to be from communities where the belief in witchcraft permeates.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were provided with an information sheet regarding the nature of the study as well as the date, time and place for the interview. For the individual discussions, the researcher went to the community in question with the informant. The informant then led the researcher to those individuals who agreed to participate in the study. The participants were made aware of the fact that if they found the interview distressing, arrangements to see a counsellor would be made. The relevant arrangements were made with a Helpline to assist participants in the event that they found the interviews emotionally distressing.

Besides the informant, participant and the researcher, the reason for visits to certain members of these communities was not viewed with suspicion. In part, this was based on the presence of the Institution the researcher was affiliated to at the time of the research. The University of South Africa's Institute for Social and Health Sciences has a strong presence in the communities where the data was collected from.

Interview schedule

An interview schedule comprised of only three questions to launch the interviews and focus group discussions (these are: what is witchcraft; what can witches do and; who are witches). The conversations moved as per the information provided by the participant and allowed the researcher to probe further. Some were hand-written (7 informal conversations); while the three focus group discussions were recorded. The researcher attempted to capture this information verbatim.

Data analysis

Data was analysed in two stages. Firstly we used thematic content analyses to elucidate on community members understanding of witchcraft. The researcher read and re-read the collected information. Notes were taken while reading. This enabled the researcher to formulate an overall understanding of the meanings of witchcraft presented by the participants. This technique allowed for relevant issues to be highlighted through the identification of themes

(Henning, 2004; Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Green, Hussain, Burns and Raphael (2000) also suggest that this analytical tool allows the researcher to elicit the depth and detail required.

Secondly, discourse analysis was deemed suitable for this study (Fairclough, 2003). In the broadest sense, discourse analysis is described as a determined way to talk about and understand the world (Winther, Jorgensen & Phillips, 2000). In a more abstract sense, a discourse can be seen as a category which designates the broadly semiotic elements of social life (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse analysis, with a focus on gender then, enabled us to be attentive to the discourses women and men drew upon to make sense of their experiences as well as how these experiences reflect particular social, cultural and historical contexts. The researcher was thus, able to explore understandings of witchcraft within a gendered frame, as expressed through language.

The feminist research position regards gender as crucial in all aspects of life and it must be taken into consideration when voicing marginalised communities (Seedat, Duncan, Lazarus, 2003). This allows for an understanding of a phenomenon being cognisant of gender norms which influence, direct and dictate most of social living. To achieve this, we specifically drew on discourse semantics. Discourse semantics refer to propositional patterns described through language expressions (Thetela, 2001). As such, attention was given to the choice of words, phrasing and association of words used to describe witches, as we believe these choices feed into the gendering of witchcraft.

Observation and reflexivity, accentuated by feminist methodology underlines the significance of the researcher as an inseparable part of the research process. Even though this principle pre-dates feminism in qualitative research, feminist methodology has exonerated on this principle. Extending the gender-equality sub-text, they highlight that social processes must be interpreted and understood from within the reality of those who are being studied (Reinharz, 1992). This enables the researcher to come as close to understanding those being studied. The researcher thus documented observations immediately after the informal conversation or focus group discussion. Observation of participants was paramount as well as conversations, comments and discussions that occurred once the official data collection was over. This is important as it provided the researcher with valuable information that would otherwise, be lost. Where relevant, these observations are fused into the results presented below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents the findings of the study. We firstly present four themes produced from the thematic content analysis. These were: (i) *descriptions and capacity of witchcraft;*(ii) *the belief in witchcraft* (iii) *the fear of witchcraft* and (iv) *violence and witchcraft accusations*. Following this, we locate these understandings and explore them discursively in light of gendered violence under two sections: (i) *the gendering of witchcraft* and (ii) *violence prevention intervention*. We draw specifically on feminist psychological theory and the implication this poses for violence prevention interventions.

Descriptions and capacity of witchcraft

Witchcraft as a theory of misfortune provides an explanatory framework for almost every social, psychological, economic and health-related experience in contexts where the belief is real (Levack, 1995; Summer, 1945; Niehaus, 1993). Participants reflected perspectives of witchcraft as a theory of misfortune. Interestingly, participants seemed surprised when asked "what is witchcraft?". However, they were able to present perspectives of witchery when the terms *'moloi'*, *'abathakati'* or even *'umuthi'* was used.

> *It is the control and manipulation of people, things and events for a negative outcome in life. It is also a form to get back at people or make one do something they would not ordinarily do or practice. It causes dysfunction.*

> *They make your life upside down they do it with muthi they get it from the floor most of the muthi the people they know.*

> *You sometimes you fight with your husband...they throw something by your house everything go upside down*

> *Maybe you are doing something like a business your business is going up … they can make people not come to your store*

> *They maybe use the muthi to maybe destroy other people's life*

> *Maybe they say she mustn't have a boyfriend she mustn't have a man just like that…all her children all her family mustn't have a good life*

These perspectives reflect the understanding of witchcraft as an entity that can cause negative outcomes or experiences in one's life. From business misfortune, indicating socio-economic issues, to interpersonal quarrels and jealousy, witchcraft is understood as having the capacity to control every aspect of one's life. One participant provided an insight that strengthens the use of witchcraft accusations not only for misfortune, but for success and beauty as well. She stated:

> *When you very pretty... they say ... they hit you when the blood come out she drink the blood she suck it she suck it she suck it... they say that girl came out pretty pretty pretty and she came to the place by the rank [taxi rank] the people say that girl is so pretty.*

Witchcraft provides a coherent ideology for daily living and it seems that any and every experience can be attributed to bewitchment. This theory of misfortune, attributing all experiences in daily living to witchcraft it seems, is primarily motivated by jealousy. Jealousy as a motivating factor for witchcraft was identified in several conversations:

> *Moloi is like a jealous person…when I am jealous with you then at night when you sleep I do all my things…*

> *Sometimes the neighbours can do witchcraft others because of your children are too cute or successful or I just don't like you so I just want to witchcraft you*

> *…you know moloi neh…is full of jealous*

> *For instance with black people we can marry two wives where maybe to find the first wife or the kids don't like the second wife or the kids or maybe there are two sisters and the one sister's children are successful then the other will be jealous*

Witchcraft can be initiated through jealousy at the success or beauty of others. This finding is similar to dominant threads in the literature, which cites jealousy as a motivating factor for witchcraft.

Witches were also believed to use an array of fantastical means to achieve their goals. This was similar to most understandings, that witches, or the users of magic, employ supernatural elements in achieving their goals (Burne, 1914; Hole, 1939).

> *Moloi can always when you sleep when you dream something that's how it come into you they sent this like err when they take the bread and biscuit and go on top of bread it is like a taxi for them and the biscuit it's like a wheel and they fly*

> *Isigiso you are sleeping but eat at the same time and you get sick the medical doctors can't see anything*

> *You can get swollen feet they make you sick they can send the lightning to you or like when you are pregnant they will pick up the sand where you walked and you will suffer when you are delivering*

> *You know Yaseen this moloi comes to your house they come inside from the door but you don't hear it they turn around and they make the sounds [points to behind] and the door open*

> *My grandmother told me a story of a black cat that came into her house she threw hot water [the] next day this old lady came and asked her why she burnt her*

> *She can fly she takes the broom and she [gestures a flying motion]…and she fly to somebody*

Another example of a fantasy description was that of the *tokoloshe*. In a similar fashion to zombies, who can be used by witches to harm others (Ashforth, 2000), the *tokoloshe* too, was understood as being created by witches.

> *Even the tokoloshe they make the tokoloshe … they say they making hole and they make the paap [maize porridge] and they take the body parts from the dead people they make like a pop like a doll and they say he grow like how the flower he grow they know for how long they putting it there [in the ground] now they take it out and they give the name*

They [witches] send a tokoloshe to your house. It can translate and tell the person the life you are living you can't see it they can see it ... it can sleep with you so it takes away feeling from your husband...

They see I got good life so they sent tokoloshe he is sleeping with me...

Witchcraft as described and understood by participants has the capacity to influence every aspect of one's life. The manner of achieving these aims is steeped in a tradition that associates witchcraft with fantasy and the supernatural.

It thus seems that any misfortune (or even fortune) experienced within these domains, may provide people with an opportunity to deflect self-blame and responsibility towards the intentions of jealous persons, who utilise witchery. Ashforth (2000) and others (Simmons, 1990; van Dyk, 2001) support this by concluding that witchcraft is believed as responsible for almost any and every experience while; Evans-Pritchard (1937) delineated witchcraft as an explanation for what may be deemed, undeserved misfortunes.

This feeds into the notion of witchcraft beliefs as a means to project personal autonomy, jealousy and even the success of others – not to their hard work, genetics or good fortune – but rather to the evil work of the Devil and witchcraft. In essence this takes away the social standing of an individual and an explanatory framework that maligns them is drawn upon. In light of the understandings provided by participants, we can state that the belief in witchcraft is a current reality for many in South Africa.

Belief in witchcraft

Witchcraft beliefs in South Africa can be said to derive its reality from within the framework of religious and cultural systems. This became apparent when participants spoke about protecting oneself from bewitchment. Below we present excerpts from various conversations.

If I leave the Church the tokoloshe he [will] kill me

A moloi can fly ... from here to Mozambique that's how I heard from the Church

Sometimes my grandmother she likes me so much when she passed away she can leave me with these things

Some of them they teach their own children

Religion and culture it seems, provides the foundation for the belief in witchcraft. These beliefs, it has been theorized (Swartz, 2002), provides a model of health, illness and misfortune and influences behaviour, thinking and actions adopted by people. Given the centrality of cultural affiliation and religious beliefs in the lives of many, it follows that if witchcraft is defined as a real phenomenon, within these domains – will influence the thinking, behaviour and actions of people. It thus follows further that the malevolent association of witchcraft with harm and destruction will be imbued with fear by those who believe in it.

The fear of bewitchment

Through my conversations with participants, I realised how fearful people were of bewitchment. Participants as well as those members of the community who did not participate in the study, warned me that *"this witchcraft thing is dangerous"* and that I should not pursue it. Alternatively, they were shocked at my interest in the topic and refused to speak to me.

In our model of witchcraft developed for this paper, we indicated that fear of witchcraft is derived from its perceived capacity to cause harm. This is supported by Tangherlini (2000) and Olliver (1928) who inform us that witchcraft embeds fear in those who believe in it. In fact, most descriptions of witchcraft, including photographic depictions, reproduce the image of witchcraft in association with fear.

An example to highlight fear was provided by a participant who agreed to provide me with information. However, due to a thunderstorm that occurred after my initial conversation with her, she became very reluctant to speak to me being convinced that witches can send lightning to kill people. She said:

I hope they [witches] don't come for me tonight

Another participant stated:

...once someone said you are the witch no one will want to come close to you because you will they will everybody will [be] scared of you because they will you know it is not a good thing it is an evil thing it is not right at all

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Another participant indicated no longer being afraid of the *moloi* since she joined a Church. She informed me that:

> *Especially [if] you don't pray you can be a very scared you can't even say moloi moloi is like even if you say tokoloshe and you don't pray you can't say tokoloshe once you say tokoloshe at night he come*

These understandings indicate that if witchcraft is associated with harm, evil and destruction – one would be fearful of being a victim. This fear, we theorized may manifest in violent consequences against those accused of witchcraft.

Violence and witchcraft accusations

When asked what should be done to those who were identified as witches, participants said:

> *Kill them because they are not a good people to live with they ruin your life*

And,

> *The community they do horrible things they are burnt and stabbed the whole family*

These responses reflected the commonly held notion, that once an accusation of witchcraft has been made, violence is likely to follow (Levack, 1995; Barstow, 1995). One participant informed me that in Limpopo province, he was personally involved in several violent attacks with accused witches.

Yaseen:	*ok so you got the moloi out of the house and what did you say*
Participant:	*we first ask her are you the moloi yeah then she say I'm a moloi okay tell us what you did I did 1 2 3 to Letti she tell us and we tell her okay tell us we won't do anything to you*
Yaseen:	*you won't do anything*
Participant:	*nothing then she tells us*
Yaseen:	*aha so you promise her that she will be okay*
Participant (m):	*so she saying everything I did this I did this and you know that men who passed away haai he never passed away I got him in the yard*
Yaseen:	*okay*

Participant (m): *ok then she show us we want him okay we can find him okay so it's better we kill you now*

Yaseen: *so you kill her?*

Participant (m): *yeah*

Yaseen: *how would you kill her?*

Participant (m): *haai is the gang so someone can take the stone or the stick the rope the fire and then we put the fire the diesel and burn them*

Given the fear of bewitchment, it follows that avoidance of or more so, the eradication of this threat is needed. This is why; large groups of people may attack an accused as they are afraid of bewitchment.

In another conversation, participants debated witchcraft violence. This conversation is important, given that participants began speaking about protecting the witch. However, as the conversation continued, they alluded to the fact that killing a witch is the best solution.

Participant: *They must take her to the police... they must lock the witch up*

Yaseen: *Don't they kill her?*

Participant: *If you kill her it's another problem*

Yaseen: *So they can kill her?*

Participant: *Yes they can kill her but they must not do it in front of the police*

Yaseen: *What will the police do?*

Participant: *The police they can do nothing because when the community is cross the*

community is cross

It must be noted that we do not advocate for, or even support the actions taken by community members against those accused of witchcraft. However, we must bear in mind that the violent consequences met by those accused may be 'justified' as a necessity that protects the survival of good against evil. Within contexts where the belief in witchcraft is subscribed by religion and culture and that the belief itself is fear-based, violence may be the only action known to the community in their treatment of witchcraft. Rose (1982) explained this further by informing us that the threat posed by 'evil-doers' like witches, creates the condition to mobilize violent action against them.

The section above discussed the four thematic areas identified in the transcripts. We conclude this section by stating that the belief in witchcraft manifests in fear. This fear derives strength from the fantastical and supernatural capabilities assigned to witches and manifests in violent consequences for the accused. This consequent, it follows, seems to be the most desirable manner of treatment for witchcraft – given its capacity to harm and the need within the community to protect itself against such harm. The following section locates this understanding within a feminist psychological perspective, concluding with the implications this poses for violence prevention interventions.

The above section discussed results from conversations and focus group discussions held with community members on witchcraft. The purpose of which was to demonstrate the nature of belief in witchcraft in current South African communities. It became evident that witches are believed to be responsible for misfortunes faced and that jealousy is a motivating factor. Fantasy descriptions of witchcraft were provided by participants and this fed into the general fear most of the participants held regarding bewitchment. The fear of bewitchment escalates in most cases towards violent behaviour. The violence faced by accused witches stems from the belief that they caused harm, havoc or destruction to someone around them or the community at large. Violence is considered an appropriate means of treatment for those accused of witchcraft.

The following section presents results from the discourse analysis, which focused on analysis of gender and witchcraft. This was very important to do, as the image of the witch has been through the ages associated with a specific gender. The results presented below analyse whether this age-old tradition of associating women with witchcraft is prevalent in South African community beliefs. The implication posed for violence prevention interventions will then be discussed, as the gender associated with witchcraft influences the outcome of any attempts to address the violence.

THE GENDERING OF WITCHCRAFT

In two separate conversations, it was noted that men and women could be a witches.

Excerpt 1:

Yaseen: *okay and the moloi is it a man or a woman?*

Participant: *both both both*

Yaseen: *both?*

Participant: *both*

Yaseen: *so it's not old woman?*

Participant: *no nowadays it is the small small like me or young woman young man*

Participant: *yeah even girls*

Yaseen: *even girls?*

Participant: *Yeah*

Excerpt 2:

Yaseen: *okay so is the moloi a woman*

Both Participants: *it can be woman it can be man*

Yaseen: *okay it can be woman or man*

Both: *yes*

Participant (female):   *even a child can be moloi*

Yaseen: *even a child*

Both Participant (female):   *even a child*

Yaseen: *so anybody can be moloi*

Both: *anybody can be moloi*

The association of witchcraft and women has been challenged by several authors who indicate that the charges of witchcraft were not sex-specific and rather affected both genders (Ben-Yehuda, 1981; Bethencourt, 1990). Despite this acknowledgment, women seem to be more

likely victims than men in studies conducted in South Africa and elsewhere (Bornman et al., 1998; Briggs, 2002). This indicates that specific gender stereotyping may exist regarding witchcraft beliefs; where, although both genders can cause harm through the label – it has come to represent women more so. Historically too, we are exposed to this associations, through artwork, witch-hunters manuals and folklore (Broedel, 2003; Barstow, 1994).

Drawing on Thetela's (2001) discursive structure, we focused our attention on the choice of words utilised in describing witchery, to demonstrate this. The excerpt below provides us with an indication of the gendering of witchcraft.

The excerpt below took place with participants working at a local butchery. During one of the lunch breaks the researcher had the participants discuss witchcraft. Both men and women were in the group. Initially, the group participants indicated that both genders can engage in witchcraft. However, as will be highlighted in the excerpt below, it seems as if the label of the witch is associated more so with women than men and that this belief is deeply ingrained.

Yaseen :	*how do you know that?*
Participants:	*Laugh*
Participant (male):	*they learn from the <u>mother</u> maybe that time the <u>mother</u> err the <u>mother</u> is err turn them into err thakati [witch]*
Yaseen:	*okay so the <u>mother</u> will teach the <u>daughter</u>*
Participant (male):	*the <u>daughter</u>*
Yaseen:	*okay*
Participant (female):	*yeah and sometimes also my <u>grandmother she</u> likes me so much when <u>she</u> passed away <u>she</u> can leave <u>me</u> with these things*

This excerpt indicates that despite the acknowledgement that witchcraft can be utilised by anyone, women seem to be associated with its label. The use of words like 'she', 'her', 'mother' and 'grandmother' allude to characteristic feminine features. In another conversation that took place between two participants explaining witchcraft to me, the gendering of witchcraft became evident.

Participant (male): you know <u>moloi</u> neh what <u>she</u> can do maybe Letti is your wife neh and <u>she</u> is <u>pregnant</u> and the <u>moloi's daughter</u> doesn't have a baby okay

Yaseen: okay

Participant (male): <u>she</u> can take that baby out you will still look <u>pregnant</u> but <u>she</u> will take the baby out and give it to <u>her daughter</u> there is nothing inside

Yaseen: okay so the <u>moloi</u> will give it to <u>her daughter</u>

Participant (male): yeah to <u>her daughter</u>

Yaseen: to <u>her daughter</u>

Participant (male):   yeah to <u>her daughter</u>

This also emerged when discussing the consequences faced by those accused of witchcraft, seen in the two excerpts below.

Yaseen: okay but in many communities they are killing witches they are burning them err stoning them…what do you say to that?

Silence

Participant (female): because say if I sometimes … if I accuse this <u>lady</u> of a <u>witch</u> and <u>she</u> later <u>get sick</u> and <u>she</u> say[s] I did this and this and this so you can't believe that person is the <u>witch</u> you can't know so if you think <u>she is the witch</u> you mustn't <u>kill her</u> you must <u>forgive her</u>

Participant (female): They must take <u>her</u> to the police... they must <u>lock</u> the <u>witch</u> up

Yaseen: Don't they kill her?

Participant (female): If you <u>kill her</u> it's another <u>problem</u>

Yaseen: So they can kill her?

Participant (female): Yes they can <u>kill her</u> but they must not do it in front of the police

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Yaseen:	*What will the police do?*
Participant (female):	*The police they can do nothing because when the community is cross the community is cross*

The choice of words to describe witchcraft was consistent in this manner with all participants, male and female. Firstly, they acknowledged that witchcraft can be utilised by both genders. But the choice of words by the participants to further describe witchcraft was consistently feminised. These findings pose certain implications that are steeped in a tradition that stereotypes women into specific maligned roles.

This implies, as it did historically, that women were primarily positioned as more susceptible than men to the deception of the Devil (Stark, 2003). Men were thus aligned with purity and goodness; while women were subject to an association with evil and destruction, harm and with the experience of misfortunes. The labelling of women as more susceptible to witchcraft than men allows for both men and women to function from within a particular reality that supports the notion of men as powerful and women having the capacity towards evil – which must be controlled, through violence. Our analyses of the text in which the participant formerly from the Limpopo province described his participation in a witch-hunt demonstrate this point further.

Yaseen:	*ok so you got the moloi out of the house and what did you say*
Participant (male):	*we first ask her are you the moloi yeah then she say I'm a moloi okay tell us what you did I did 1 2 3 to Letti she tell us and we tell her okay tell us we won't do anything to you*
Yaseen:	*you won't do anything*
Participant (male):	*nothing then she tells us*
Yaseen:	*aha so you promise her that she will be okay*
Participant (male):	*so she saying everything I did this I did this and you know that man who passed away haai he never passed away I got him in the yard*
Yaseen:	*okay*
Participant (m):	*ok then she show us we want him okay we can find him okay so it's better we kill you now*
Yaseen:	*so you kill her?*
Participant (m):	*yeah*

Yaseen:	*how would you <u>kill her</u>?*
Participant (m):	*haai is the gang so someone can take the stone or the stick the rope the fire and then we put the fire the diesel and burn them*

In this excerpt, we notice that this female was positioned in a manner that alluded to her causing harm to men: "*so <u>she</u> saying everything I did this I did this and you know that man who passed away haai he never passed away I got him in the yard*". In another conversation, a participant says "*the <u>strong</u> one [witch] is <u>women</u>*".

Even though women may be involved, within communities, an atmosphere is created regarding the treatment of women in the face of experienced misfortunes. In fact, we can state, that in light of experienced misfortune, women as witches will be the most likely to be accused, given their believed association with evil. Women who face violence because of this labelling are not considered as victims to violence. This links to Bevacqua's (2000) study which found that rape victims are often made to feel guilty for having experienced rape. In a similar fashion, in communities where the belief in witchcraft exists, women are positioned as more susceptible than men and guilty for the 'crimes' they committed using witchcraft and the violence faced is deemed a necessity.

The association of women with witchcraft may represent a structural expression of gender inequality. Essentially, this (re) produces a hierarchical community structure that favours men and places women in a subordinate position. Feminists have concluded in this respect that societies, by virtue of their structuring, are patriarchal, serving the maintenance of male domination, where men are considered stronger (Crawford & Unger, 2004). This is true within the contexts presented by the participants of this study too. The meanings and understanding they presented about witchcraft and witches, provides us with sufficient evidence to conclude that women are structurally positioned within these communities, in submissive roles. In fact, it can be stated that to view women as witches represents an attempt to maintain a particular status quo, favouring men.

In light of this, the violent reaction against an accused 'witch' represents a tradition that subordinates the status of women in relation to men (Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006). It follows, that witchcraft-related violence does not receive adequate attention as an expression of violence against women. Rather, it is viewed as a necessity in saving the community at large or; it is viewed as an embedded aspect of the culture of the people in question. Within contexts

then, where witchcraft beliefs abound, an accusation of witchcraft against women will not be questioned. Rather, witchcraft as a dominant alliteration of femininity dominates and; women find themselves subjected to an array of violent consequences. These outcomes will not and are not seen as an expression of gender-based violence. Rather, it is circumscribed as a necessity. This has implications for violence prevention interventions.

Violence prevention interventions

In light of the violent consequences associated with witchcraft, interventions are imperative. In fact, given that witchcraft accusations and the associated violent consequences that follow are associated more so with women than men, provides more impetus for the identification of and implementation of intervention strategies to protect and prevent future gender based violence, expressed as witchcraft accusations. However, witchcraft violence prevention interventions will either fail, or not address the issue of violence against women as it is not viewed as such. Rather, witchcraft violence is positioned as women utilising witchcraft to cause harm. Government's response in this regard in South Africa supports not treating witchcraft accusations as a facet of violence against women, but rather as witchcraft-related violence. The Mpumalanga Witchcraft Suppression Act (2007) called for an end to the belief in witchcraft, supporting the notion that the phenomenon is not being framed as gendered violence. Witchcraft is considered a real 'evil' that must be stopped. Consequently the gendered violence that characterises such accusations, does not receive adequate attention.

The perpetuation of a stereotype that positions women as more susceptible than men is (re) established, further silencing the plight of many women. Feminist psychologists have argued that violence against women, can be summarised as a male's response to female insubordination (Crawford & Unger, 1997). In light of the lack of acknowledgment of witchcraft-related violence as gender-based, we can argue that witchcraft beliefs, which permeate almost every aspect of African life, allude to the status given to women in such contexts. This implies a gender order, which positions men as dominant, with women vulnerable to abuse, victimisation and subordination. These silenced voices must be given expression as argued by feminist psychologists. Ultimately, any intervention aimed at preventing witchcraft-related violence cannot be done without an acknowledgment that the violence itself is gender-based. To do so, would only imply (re) producing a particular gender relationship that favours men.

It thus stands to conclude that interventions must (re) position themselves from within the culture, understanding how and why witches are believed to do what they do and who they are. Importantly, such interventions must be cognisant of the gendered dynamic that characterises witchcraft accusations and; they must be positioned from this perspective.

CONCLUSION

This paper located witchcraft beliefs from within the reality of South African community members. Community members witchcraft beliefs firstly indicated that witchcraft is a dimension of African life and that secondly witches have the capacity to cause an array of socio-psychological misfortunes. The fantasy descriptions provided of witchcraft fed into the fear of bewitchment. We stand to conclude that the fear of bewitchment manifests in violent behaviour against those who are accused of witchcraft. There was an overarching idea that the witch figure is not gendered. However, the discourse analysis, which was centred on gender, found that the image of women is located with witchcraft. This gives rise to power dynamics between men and women, ultimately positioning women as submissive. Patriarchal gender ideals seem to influence the perception and treatment of women, as evidenced through witchcraft-related violence. The implication of this was discussed in light of the need for violence prevention interventions to address a facet of gendered violence affecting South Africa.

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CHAPTER 4:

A FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF WOMEN ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Y Ally

Seen as steeped in patriarchal cultures and traditions of belief in the existence of witches, witchcraft accusations, often followed by violence against the 'witch', are a common reality in current South Africa and thus understanding this phenomenon is imperative. However, scant psychological research into witchcraft accusations exists in South Africa. Applying a feminist psychological framework, this paper explores witchcraft accusations as an expression of gendered violence. The paper argues that witchcraft accusations and the subsequent violence against the accused are essentially about the restoration of men's gender power over women. The paper is based on interviews with women accused of witchcraft.

Key words: witchcraft; gender relations; violence against women; witchcraft accusations; gender-based violence

INTRODUCTION

Historically, women have more often than men been associated with and faced the consequences of witchcraft accusations (Briggs, 2002; Clark, 1991). The association of witchcraft with women has been challenged by only a few scholars (Ben-Yehuda, 1981; Bethencourt, 1990), who suggest that charges of witchcraft were not sex-specific.

In response to this, Barstow (1994) suggests one possible explanation why the association of witchcraft with women has not been challenged. She suggests that men accused of witchcraft were in most cases related to convicted women, as their husbands, sons, or grandsons and thus "not perceived as the originators of witchcraft" (p. 24). Those men who were not related to female victims had criminal records and witchcraft "was not the original charge but was added on to make the initial accusation more heinous" (Barstow, 1994, p. 25).

Remnants of the association of women with witchcraft exist today. Within the South African context, even though men may occasionally be accused of witchcraft, witchcraft accusations and their accompanying consequences continue to disproportionately affect the lives of many women (Ashforth, 2005; 1993; Niehaus, 1998). In 1998, a study commissioned by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) reported women as the primary victims of witchcraft accusations (Minnaar, Wentzel & Payze, 1998 in Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998). These and other studies support the notion of the association of women with witchcraft.

Women accused of witchcraft are likely to face violence from community members, neighbours as well as their own families (Adinkrah, 2004; Leff, Fontleve & Martin, 2008). It is noted that in the course of this study, several video clips and photographs of witchcraft-related violence were handed to the researcher and the violence evidently experienced by the victims in the video clips and photographs are brutal and in most cases, lethal (Unknown Author, witchcraft-related violence, 2009).

One of these pictured received by the researcher appears below.

Image A

In image A (Unknown Author, witchcraft-related violence, video, 2009), we note a naked elderly women curled up. It seems as though she is bleeding, as evidenced by the blood in the picture. The individual sending this picture informed me that the woman was being beaten because she was a witch.

In another video (Unknown Author, witchcraft-related violence, video, 2009), a young naked woman is accused of being a witch (Images B & C). In the video, members of the community were screaming hysterically, while others seem shocked. Anti-witch sayings like *("umThakathi") "she is a witch", "we are afraid"* are being said.

Image B   Image C

While not the originating motivation, the disturbing reality in the above pictures provides us with additional encouragement to pursue this study and examine what might be considered of marginal and purely historical interest in the Western world.

Scant contemporary psychological research into witchcraft accusations exists in South Africa. A review of historical studies of witchcraft indicates that it is a phenomenon imbued with a sense of fear. Hansen (1969, p. 11) indicated that symptoms presented by victims of witchcraft derived from "not witchcraft itself but the victim's fear of it". The fear of witchcraft seems to stem from the belief that witches – the users of magical ointments, charms and spells – cause death, illness and sicknesses, sexual impotence, divorce, business failure, relationship conflict, losing a job, misery and general misfortunes to anyone and everyone (Briggs, 2002; Crawford, 1967; Levack, 1987). For example, In his study on witchcraft in South Africa Niehaus (2000)

showed that witches are believed to have the capacity to turn corpses into zombie-slaves who would then carry out the commands and orders of the witch. These orders involved abducting children, stealing their souls and using them to harm their enemies. The supernatural ability of witches is said to be achieved through a pact taken with the Devil who is believed to have sexual relations with women in exchange for magical powers (Parrinder, 1963). At other times, witches are believed to have the capacity to utilise natural elements found within nature to meet their 'evil' needs (Levack, 1995).

Witches are also associated with the capacity to fly and shape-shift, amongst other supernatural talents (Baroja, 1964; Marwick, 1982; Mayer, 1954). It is on the basis of these popular, 'traditional', beliefs, which in certain contexts and historical times can dominate societal understanding, that witchcraft is feared.

Deriving its meaning from within religio-cultural belief systems, witchcraft influences the thinking and behaviour of a significant number of people in South Africa. The influence of witchcraft belief on thought is readily evident in accounts of people who rationalise general and personal failures or misfortune as bewitchment (Swartz, 2002; Mkhize, 2004). In his rather old study, Pritchard (1937) alluded to this capacity of witchcraft belief to influence everyday functioning. He contended that witchcraft accusations remove personal autonomy for misfortunes experienced and places blame onto a supernatural 'evil' entity.

But superseding this fantastical reality, we must understand that the image of witchcraft and witches more specifically, are a social construction. As Mayer (1954, p. 61) said, "society creates the image of the witch, and pins this image down onto particular individuals". Thus, even though witchcraft accusations may be directed at a supernatural entity with the hope of maintaining community cohesion by blaming a supernatural mythical being for misfortunes as Pritchard (1937) suggested, the image of the witch has come to represent very specific personas. It follows that to define the idea of witchcraft, we must understand the experiences of individuals who are likely to be accused. Mayer (1954, p.62) further recommended that in order to understand who a witch is we should ask "how witches stand related to their victims or their actual accusers". Historically as well as in contemporary times, women as a category are most often associated with witchcraft (Broedel, 2003; Clark, 1991; Barstow, 1994; Heinemann, 2000). This association of women with witchcraft arises from their cultural positioning and treatment within their communities.

This paper explores witchcraft accusations against women in South Africa using feminist psychological understanding. Women accused of witchcraft were interviewed to examine the conjecture that witchcraft accusations are essentially about the restoration of men's gender power over women steeped in patriarchal cultures and traditions of belief in the existence of witches. The paper further suggests that the person behind the witch label comes to represent a threat to the assigned gender roles in a particular community and the behaviours associated with these roles. The threat some women may pose to assigned gender roles allows us to comment on witchcraft-related violence as an expression of gender based violence. The following section briefly describes feminist psychological theory as well as its appropriateness to explaining gendered violence. Next the paper offers a feminist psychological explanation of witchcraft accusations before describing the methodology.

FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The World Health Organisation (Morena, Jansen, Ellsberg, Helse & Watts, 2005) recognises gender based violence or violence against women is an important public health issue. Gender based violence is considered not only a direct cause of injury, ill-health and death, but noted as affecting women's health indirectly through unwanted pregnancies, mental illness and sexually transmitted diseases (Terry & Hoare, 2007).

Although the terms gender based violence and violence against women are often used interchangeably (as they will be in this paper), there are subtleties that must be briefly noted. Arguably, the concept of (sexual and) gender based violence can well be employed to represent violence from heterosexual men to homosexual men or even within a homosexual relationship. Leach and Humphreys (2007) state that gendered violence may extend to the heterosexual context and may include girl-on-girl violence. Although these debates are important to acknowledge, here we adopt the perspective that gender based violence or violence against women is

> violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or that affect women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, and threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation No 12).

Violence against women is underpinned by a need to constrain women at personal, household, community and even state levels (Article 2(a) – (c) of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women UN General Assembly Resolution 48/104, 20 December 1993).

Studies employing feminist psychological principles reveal that violence against women is an expression of gender relation, which supports the subordination of women to masculine power and control (White & Kowlaski, 1996; Shefer, Boonzaier and Kiguwa, 2006). Within this framework it is argued that gendered violence represent attempts by men to further control women. For example, in her studies of women abuse in South Africa, Boozaier (2008) indicates to us that men's violence generally is an accentuation of the masculinity narrative. She says that men attempt to hold on to hegemonic forms of masculinity – through the perpetration of violence. Her studies revealed that both men and women drew on hegemonic gendered ideals to describe their relationships, which were characterised by violence. While not a feminist psychological contribution, a study by Jewkes (2002) informed us that societies with stronger ideologies of male dominance have more intimate partner violence. Similarly, Wood's (2004) study showed that men who abuse felt that their authority as men was disrespected by their partners – which led to their abuse. Essentially, these gender based violence imbalances appears to be facilitated by contexts where patriarchal ideals or ideologies of male dominance is entrenched.

An ideological system whereby men are considered as a primary authority within all social organisations, patriarchy is apparently found across the world, and has existed since the earliest forms of civilisations (Kambarani, 2006). Patriarchal ideals are expressed in, amongst others institutions, the family within which patriarchal values are relayed from one generation to the next. In patriarchal cultures women are defined in terms of their submissive position and role in relation to men. Many African communities function in accordance to patriarchal systems. For example, Kambarani (2006, p. 3) informs us that

> ...In the Shona culture, once a girl reaches puberty all teachings are directed towards pleasing one's future husband as well as being a gentle and obedient wife. Her sexuality is further defined for her, as she is taught how to use it for the benefit of the male race.

It is not only Shona culture where the relationships between men and women is characterised by gender inequities characteristic of patriarchy. We argue that in most societies the positioning

of women in relation to men involves the subordination of the feminine to masculine ideals. Patriarchal ideology is omnipresent, even though feminists acknowledged that patriarchy is not the only influence on the expression of violence (Crawford & Unger, 2004), However, culture, sex and even age, often cited as factors that may influence expressions of violence against women, are to be thought of as embedded within or entwined with patriarchy. To argue that in many societies women are subordinated to men does not suggest in any way that the domination of men over women is 'natural'. On the contrary, Hester (1992) informs us that men have to actively maintain and perpetuate their power over women and violence against women represents attempts from men to maintain that dominance (see also Wood & Jewkes, 1998).

Underpinned by patriarchal ideology, traditions, cultures and religion can and do provide justifications expressions for violence (Stark, 2003). A witchcraft accusation, which is justified by belief in the evil witch, is one such example. As indicated Roy (1998, p. 137) in her investigation of women accused of witchcraft in India, "victimizing women as witches can be seen as the height of patriarchal suppression, which devalues and undermines women in society, and 'keeps her in a property less and resource less state'". In various other studies, accusations of witchcraft are levelled mostly at women who are aged, weak, vulnerable and dependant on others; or those whose characters, physical features and behaviours are considered strange, abnormal or different; or young beautiful women; or those women who are financially and socially in positions that men are meant to assume (Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998; Barstow, 1994; de Blecourt, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Bass, 1976; Griffin, 1995; Adinkrah, 2004). These accusations against women, suggest that in certain contexts women as a category are associated with witchcraft. Women can at times then, find it hard to escape being called witches, iterating the point that the belief in witchcraft may be exploited by those who have ulterior motivations (whatever they may be) in suggesting that a woman is a witch; and by taking action against her, these motives are fulfilled (de Blecourt, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Bass, 1976; Griffin, 1995; Summers, 1948; Stark, 2003; Salmon, 1989; Federici, 1988; Harris, 1974; Geschiere & Fisiy, 1994; Niehaus, 1993, 1998; Bashwitz, 1990; Winter, 2000). In fact, Bever (2002) informs us that some authors have gone as far to assert that witch-hunting was in reality women-hunting. The association of women with witchcraft enabled us to define witchcraft accusations as an expression of gender power conflict that finds acceptance within cultures and traditions that incorporate belief in witchcraft.

WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS EXPLAINED THROUGH THE LENS OF FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

Gender relations are essentially saturated with power. The power that characterises the gender world stems from but also influences such societal forces as religion, culture, family and education. The influence of power underpins gender roles and norms, which in turn supports the superiority of males over females.

There are two ways in which a female can transgress the gender roles designated to her. Firstly, the experience of 'misfortune' miscalculation, misadventure, and so forth (death, physical and mental illness, sexual impotence, divorce, business failure, losing a job, childbirth, and relationship conflict, and the like) can be projected onto a supposedly powerful being, the witch. As we said, religion and culture incorporate the belief in witchcraft and indicated that witchcraft can influence explanations of almost every sphere of human life. The pervasive religion- and culture-embedded witchcraft belief therefore readily allows for the displacement of personal autonomy and responsibility as well as explaining away social inequality, as it may seem easier or make more cultural sense to blame witchcraft.

Secondly, women who challenge the ideological, cultural and religious norms which dictate gender roles are also placed within the category of marginalised individuals. Because they occupy roles that are mostly designated for men, these women are considered strange and deviant. Their transgression of gendered roles prompts the accusation of witchcraft and allows the community, neighbours and some family members to 'make sense of' behaviour from women which does not adhere to the ideological stances that dominate.

What we must bear in mind here is that both categories of women (those who are seen as powerful and those who challenge prevalent norms) discussed above points toward positions of power. These women represent a clear threat within a context where gender roles are designated and hierarchically structured – with men assuming positions of power (Shefer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006; Crawford & Unger, 2004). Thus, when a woman becomes 'powerful', be it career-related, within her family, voices her opinion, or even looks physically different or considered strange, by virtue of gender positioning she attracts a witchcraft accusation. In contexts where witchcraft belief influences almost every avenue, gender relations are also influenced. The accusation of witchcraft allows for the removal of the power associated with so-called 'deviant' persons as well as for the reproduction of unequal gender roles and relationships supported by patriarchal religious and cultural ideology.

The accusation of witchcraft also has the capacity to re-entrench a particular gender relation. Imbued with the fear of being bewitched, people are likely to withdraw from interacting with the accused who is thus isolated. Women who witness the isolation of the consequence to the 'witch' (who was powerful or challenged the gender hierarchy) will therefore relearn their positions. The accusation of witchcraft thus fulfils the need to maintain a particular gender relationship that keeps men in positions of power.

Witchcraft accusations thus represent gender dynamics saturated with power in a manner that is consistent within a particular context. The context of witchcraft accusations is one within which supernatural beliefs hold sway and influence thinking and behaviour. In a Western or westernised community, a female who is sexually expressive, or dominates within the corporate world, may be labelled as 'slut' or 'bitch' – based on the fact that she is taking control over her sexuality and sexual expression or because she assumes a powerful position within the world that is meant for men. In parallel fashion, in a non-westernised, 'traditional' context a female who is perceived to be dominant is labelled a witch. Drawing on a historical figure, Joan of Arc (Jehanne d'Arc), who in the 15th century led an army – a power role associated with men – was burnt at the stake for being a witch presumably because she was powerful. In contexts where witchcraft beliefs are pervasive, then, the witchcraft label fulfils the same function as the bitch label. Steeped in a historical tradition associating women with evil, an accusation of witchcraft enables one to express dissatisfaction with the transgressing behaviour of a female. Also, it authorises the removal of power that this female has, whether this power is real or imagined, through the use of violence. The violence often follows after an accusation of witchcraft has been made. As such, a person labelled as a witch will not only be feared, because fear in itself implies immobility, but she will also be subject to violence. The violence against those accused of witchcraft is done with the intention of protecting the community. This protection it seems is protection of men from being over-powered by women.

The violence against the accused then, represents an attempt to re-establish a gender power relation where men occupy positions of power in most spheres of life (Jewkes, 2002; White & Kowalski, 1998). Violence also reduces the fears of bewitchment and misfortune by 'removing' the source of the misfortune. Furthermore, the violence against the accused perpetuates the gender order as it is accepted within the context in question. The removal of the perceived misfortune and the consequential re-establishment of power by men is important, as, even though the violence against the accused is carried out by groups of people (Briggs, 2002), the accusation begins within a gendered relation. Through the dyadic contact, between

neighbours, within the family, acquaintances or even friends, a restoration of a gendered relation is re-established. Additionally, and quite importantly, this sends a message within the socio-cultural context to both males and females, about 'how things are done'.

In this paper we apply this understanding to the actual experiences of women who have been accused of witchcraft, through interviews. In doing so, we attempt to demonstrate that witchcraft accusations function as a means to (re) establish a particular gendered relation, that resonates with patriarchal ideals.

METHODOLOGY

The study aims to apply feminist psychological theory to understand witchcraft accusations. A qualitative research design broadly situated within the interpretive social science paradigm was employed. Within this paradigm, the subjective sense of reality is the basis for understanding and explaining social life (Burr, 1995). Five women accused of witchcraft were interviewed and allowed them to express and assign meaning to their experiences.

Process

The researcher adopted the following steps to ensure the safety of all involved in the research. Firstly, the researcher told his informants of the nature of the study (what information was being sought) and informants were asked if they were aware of anyone who was accused of witchcraft. Informants were colleagues of researcher, who lived in some of the communities. Secondly, the informants then approached potential participants and informed them of the study. The participants either agreed or disagreed to participate. Those who agreed to participate were provided with a time and date for the collection of their experiences. There were no consequences if a decision not to participate was made.

It must be noted that within the context of the study, the topic on witchcraft is considered a taboo. The researcher himself was on several occasions 'warned' about the dangers of the study. This included risks of being bewitched to physical harm from those who may be suspicious of the research intentions.

Given the community-based intervention work that is pursued by an institution the researcher was affiliated with (University of South Africa's Institute for Social and Health Sciences), the

presence of the researcher was not met with suspicion, even when visiting the accused women. This was based on the actual presence of the researcher in these communities for other projects.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were provided with an information sheet regarding the nature of the study as well as the date, time and place for the interview. The participants were made aware of the fact that if they found the interview distressing, arrangements to see a counsellor would be made. The researcher was at the time, employed at a University Institution and the relevant arrangements would have been made. Consent for the interpreter was also asked for. In this instant, the informants that assisted the researcher in identifying the participants served as interpreters.

Data collection

In accordance with the aims of the study, in-depth interviews were the chosen method of data collection. At the beginning of the interview participants were again informed of the purpose of the study as well as the need to audio-record the interview. The researcher had to use a translator, as 3 of the 5 participants could not speak fluent English. The translator was one of the colleagues of the researcher and signed confidentiality clauses. To protect the identity of each participant, pseudonyms were assigned. An interview schedule was developed on the basis of literature reviewed (See Appendix). These questions functioned as a guide for the researcher and the participants were probed further to elicit the depth of understanding required.

Sample

In total, five women accused of witchcraft consented verbally to participate in the study. They were informed that no identifying information would be made public. To the surprise of the researcher, the participants were willing without any qualms to participate. It almost seemed as though they utilised the interview as a means for them to psychologically debrief.

The reported ages of the participants ranged from 26 years old to 49 years above. Briggs (2002) in his investigation of witchcraft says that women within the range identified in our study were primarily the accused during the European Inquisition. Similarly, other authors also indicate findings regarding the age of the accused that are consistent with our sample (Barstow, 1996; Hester, 1992).

The participant's demographics appear in the table below. Pseudonyms are attached to each participant.

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	AGE	OCCUPATION
Helen	Female	49	Traditional Healer; principal of crèche
Annie	Female	26	Traditional Healer
Mariam	Female	39	Housewife
Susan	Female	Refused to give age	Dressmaker
Sheila	Female	49	Street Vendor

Table 1: Participants' profiles

Death and being driven away from the community of those accused of witchcraft is not uncommon, and thus a surprising finding of the project was that many participants of this study were alive and still residing within their respective communities[3].

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[3] In another study linked to this project, we explored news reports of witchcraft violence in South Africa and community understandings thereof. We concluded that violence with often lethal consequences was used against the accused.

It is important for us to contextualise the accusation if we are to effectively understand the powered gender relation. The table below presents reported information about those who accused the participants of witchcraft.

PARTICIPANT	PARTICIPANTS ACCUSER (GENDER)	RELATIONSHIP WITH ACCUSED
Helen	Female	Neighbour
Annie	Male	Neighbour
Mariam	Female	Neighbour
Susan	Male and Family	Neighbour
Sheila	Male and Female	Immediate family

Table 2: Sex and relation of accusers to women accused of witchcraft

Data analysis

Discourse analysis was deemed suitable for this study (Fairclough, 2003). In the broadest sense, discourse analysis is described as a way to understand the world (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips, 2000). In a more abstract sense, a discourse can be seen as a category which designates the broadly semiotic elements of social life (Fairclough, 2003). And discourse analysis? The recorded interviews were transcribed and feminist psychological understandings of gender relations and gender power were applied. This guided the analysis and aligned it with the primary objective that has been identified by feminist research – the voicing of experiences of women with the aim of empowering them (Reinharz, 1992). Thus, we located their experiences within the framework provided by research on violence against women using feminist psychological principles. Feminists have struggled against dominant methodological frames and sought to offer alternative conceptions of violence against women. Predominant frameworks have placed women as perpetrators of the violence they experience (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and a major aim of feminism is to redress these inequities. As feminist psychologists have informed us, psychology has an entrenched tradition of studying the experiences of men in explaining the experiences of women and this must change. In a discussion of the anti-rape movement for example, Bevacqua (2000, p. 50) tells us that "women who had previously kept silent about their experiences, or their fears, found in the

[consciousness raising] groups a context for rethinking rape. Instead of internalizing guilt and anxiety, they encouraged each other to talk about rape as a matter of male dominance".

Our aim was to collect data and interpret it in ways that allowed for women to attach meaning and understanding to their experience. In light of this, our data collection was guided by providing participants a platform to describe their experiences as they experienced it. This would allow us to frame witchcraft accusations from within a context of powered gender relations.

Furthermore, case studies were created for each participant on the basis of the information provided by them. This was done so that the reader will have sufficient understanding of each participant and the context within which the accusations occurred. Direct quotes from the transcripts were used where relevant to support the argument being made or to elaborate on a particular point.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are divided in two sections. The first two sections are *accusations of witchcraft from men*, and *accusations of witchcraft from women*. The decision to present our findings in this manner was based on our theoretical focus which positioned males as more likely to benefit from the accusations of women as witches. This finding, however, further demonstrated the influence of patriarchal ideals in society. The unexpected finding, accusations of witchcraft from women also feeds into this understanding as we attempt to apply feminist psychological theory to the data. After these two sections, a summary of the findings follows.

Accusations of witchcraft from men

This section reports findings from the interviews where men accused women of witchcraft. We attach feminist psychological interpretations to these findings to elaborate on the gendered dimension to witchcraft accusations.

Case 1: Sheila

Sheila, aged 49 years old, is originally from Mozambique. Her husband made the accusations of witchcraft after his second wife became ill. Her husband left her after this accusation. Additionally, she was accused of witchcraft after her son-in-law became ill. It was at this point that her son-in-law physically abused her. This included strangling her and stabbing her with a knife. Sheila pointed to the area around her neck,

arms and on her head that bore the marks of abuse. The accusation was initially made by a *sangoma* who stated that Sheila is using her daughter and turning her into a ghost to harm her son-in-law. Sheila's daughter also believes that she has the ghost in her that her mother uses to harm people with. Sheila has no communication or support from her husband. Her daughter does not speak to her and she has no contact with her grandchild. Sheila supports herself as a street vendor, selling fruits and vegetables.

Sheila ironically gained power over her husband in her role as a wife. Typically, husbands are responsible for providing for their children and wives. In Sheila's case a relationship was created wherein the wife was perceived as more powerful than her husband. The assumption that Sheila had power over her husband was derived from the following excerpt, which indicates that he did not want to be with her any longer.

Interpreter: *okay she says its starting 2006 with his husband because he's husband got the*
                two wives and then the first wife is starting to get sick and then the husband he
                told her you got a hand here to this lady

Yaseen: *okay*

Interpreter: *you witch this lady and then they coming from the sangoma* [traditional healer]
                and they are saying whatever then this lady go and call her family to come
                and solve the problem and when the family is coming here the husband is just
                going to the room

Yaseen: *okay*

Interpreter: *he doesn't want to talk*

Yaseen: *he doesn't want to talk*

Yaseen: *…does she think that maybe the husband does not want to pay for two wives*
                you know the money can we ask her that? Because it maybe that

Interpreter: *okay he say the husband he said so with his mouth he say he doesn't want to*
                support her he wants to support the other family

In the above excerpt, Sheila informs us that her husband indicated not wanting to support her. Sheila's husband needed some reason to justify his abandonment of her. The accusation of witchcraft, found through the second wife and son in law's illnesses provided the reason. However, if not for these illnesses, Sheila's husband may have left her to live entirely with his second wife but, Sheila would be considered a victim. With the accusation of witchcraft against her, Sheila's husband almost has a valid reason for leaving her – because she is tainted with

evil gained through witchcraft. In this way, Sheila had power over her husband, as he needed to find a reason to leave her.

Throughout the interview with Sheila, she provided evidence of challenging her son in law and husband's accusation of witchcraft, which we interpret as a challenge to men. In contexts where patriarchal belief is dominant, any challenge to men from women is considered a threat.

When her husband accused her of bewitching his second wife, on the basis of information from a sangoma, Sheila said: *"...okay can I come with you to the sangoma or the profeet [prophet] they refuse..."*.

When Sheila questioned the accusation, she was not given the opportunity to defend herself, quite similar to many of the records of witchcraft trials documented throughout history (Briggs, 2002; Crawford, 1967; Levack, 1987). When her son in law accused her of causing his illness she said:

"...one day she went there to fetch the grand child to take him to school the he the son in law here by the street then the son in law tell the lady you know what I don't want to see you in my house again don't come to my house then the lady say that house is not your house [it is] my daughters house I will go [it is] better you must kill [me] and take that spook out and I want to see that spook its either we must go there by where they are coming from and we must go do the traditional [healing] and then that thing we take it out"

The above two excerpts may imply that Sheila challenged the authority of men. By challenging this authority and the decision they made, that Sheila was a witch, Sheila positioned herself as someone who is disrespectful to men. And the violence that followed may have been an attempt to silence her. In response to her challenging her son in law she said:

"the son in law say no he will not go there and then he starting to go back in the house and then the mother was sitting like this [points to how Sheila was sitting] and then he started to kick to kick her and then he took the mes the knife he wanted to stab err the mother with the knife and then some lady grabbed that knife and then he just dropped the mother like this and then he doesn't talk to her"

"they are starting to tell their mother we must buy paraffin and burn her".

Sheila provided evidence that her husband was no longer interested in supporting her, despite there being a good relationship between Sheila and her husband's second wife. Sheila

speculated that the primary reason why her husband did not want to look after her or be with her was because of his second wife. She stated that her husband had no other reason to justify him wanting to leave her and thus, the accusation of witchcraft assisted him. Here we must bear in mind, that witchcraft accusations typically find themselves accompanied by the experience of misfortune, loss, illness and death and that these experiences, may provide an accuser with sufficient 'evidence' (Summers, 1948; Stark, 2003; Salmon, 1989; Federici, 1988; Harris, 1974; Geschiere & Fisiy, 1994; Niehaus, 1993, 1998; Bashwitz, 1990). According to information provided by Sheila, we state that Sheila's husband utilised his second wife and son-in-law's illness as evidence that Sheila was using witchcraft and this allowed him justifiable reason within the community to abandon Sheila.

The accusation of witchcraft against Sheila, finds sanction within the community as witchcraft beliefs exist and served the purpose of firstly, removing Sheila from her husband's care in a culturally contextualised manner. Secondly, it restored the gendered relation of men as powerful (Winter, 2000). Sheila's husband had no justifiable reason to leave her and the feeling of being responsible to Sheila may have rendered him powerless. At the time of the interview, Sheila had been disowned by her family and stated that *"she doesn't know where he [husband] is gone now"*. The accusation of witchcraft against her possibly justified her husband's abandonment. The decision from Sheila's husband to leave her because of witchcraft was probably not questioned within this context because witchcraft is a common reality. Sheila was no longer considered a wife but rather a witch. Thus we see that witchcraft was used as an excuse to foreclose a man's commitment to his wife but at the same time, it restored a gendered relation – where a man re (established) his gender power. Through the label, Sheila was rendered powerless.

Witchcraft accusations and witchcraft-related violence appear to function similarly to intimate partner violence. Research indicates that men will abuse their wives to restore their masculine power (Jewkes, 2002; Wood, 2004; Boonzaier, 2008). Thus violence against women comes to represent an attempt to achieve this aim of restoring men's power. Sheila was beaten by both her husband and son-in-law for bewitchment. Could Sheila's daughter be afraid of being associated with witchcraft. we know from the literature, that it is believed that women can pass on the skill of witchcraft o their daughters. This could possibly explain why her daughter does not want any contact with her. On another level, Sheila's daughter may be afraid of violent reactions from her husband if she chooses to acknowledge her mother as innocent. Additionally, Sheila, whether through need or personal desire, runs her own informal store.

Case 2: Annie

> Annie is 26 years old healer. She is unmarried and has a child. Annie has also trained as a traditional. She owns her house and practices as a traditional healer. Her home reflected many commodities that are not typical of an informal settlement: dining room; advanced kitchen equipment. Her male neighbour accused Annie of being a witch. He claimed that she was trying to harm him with muthi. Annie stated that as a traditional healer she was cleansing and cleaning her yard one evening and her neighbour observed her ritual. Although he did not mention this to anyone else, Annie said that he was scared of her after that and has subsequently moved out of the community.

Annie was accused of being a witch by her male neighbour. Given my observations of Annie's home, it can be stated that she appeared to be in a financial position that places her above most people in her community. As an unmarried mother, she supports her child, sister and herself. Her home was neat and tidy and had many comforts atypical in an informal settlement, like kitchen equipment and divided living quarters. The accusation from her male neighbour may have been a response to the shifts in gender power that he witnessed. Annie – a young unmarried female – assuming a role usually occupied by males.

Yaseen: *okay are you married?*

Annie: *no I'm not married*

Yaseen: *okay how old is your child?*

Annie: *1 year 5 months [at time of the interview]*

Yaseen: *what do you do?*

Annie: *in life?*

Yaseen: *yeah what do you do?*

Interpreter explains my question

Annie: *I'm working as a traditional healer*

Yaseen: *what does a traditional healer do?*

Annie: *okay so people do come sometimes they are sick or maybe there is something that is running in their yard in the night they come so that I can help them*

By virtue of her marital status (being a single mother) as well as her economic position (being self-sufficient), Annie might have been seen as defying the patriarchal role of needing a man to support her. Annie was thus not conforming to her traditional cultural-gender role. It seems that when a female becomes powerful and assumes a role assigned by society to men she is seen as a threat and as opposing the ideal of the good mother or wife image (Bashwitz, 1990; Masuku, 2005; Mitchell, 1975; Winter, 2000). This was also observed with both Sheila and Annie.

Annie indicated the following regarding her accusation of witchcraft:

Yaseen: *what do you think people in the community think of you*

Annie: *people say I am a witch because I use muthi [traditional medicine]*

Yaseen: *okay so has anyone ever accused you of being a witch did they call you a witch you know you are not a sangoma you are a witch*

Annie: *yes yes like this this there was this opposite guy [pointing to her neighbour] … he used to say because sometimes at night I feel something then I do my muthi and I throw it around the area so that man say at night I pour my muthi in his yard and then he started approaching me and telling cursing me that I am a witch*

Since witchcraft is feared, the abuse, torture, torments and even killing of a witch is viewed as a necessity by people in the community who are fearful. Even though Annie did not face any violent reactions by the accuser, the fear of bewitchment may result in violence. Susan's experience too, alludes to associating the experience of misfortune with witchcraft. By accusing those women who are considered threatening, the accusation renders a sense of fear of bewitchment by the accused and essentially takes away their social standing.

Case 3: Susan

Susan did not want to reveal her age or any other demographic information. She has been living happily in her community since 1992 with her neighbours. Her neighbours experienced misfortune in the form of illness and both parents in that home passed

away. The deceased's family, particularly the father (now deceased) and the children then accused Susan of making the couple ill by using witchcraft. The father began the accusations while he was sick. Another neighbour spread the accusation and told people that Susan must be burnt. Susan indicated that after her husband died she needed to support her family. She has a talent and interest in sewing and began doing this for a living. She is thus independent living in a brick home in a community where shacks are the norm. She also indicated that people were saying that she was a witch during the building of her house.

As a relatively powerful woman, Susan represented a threat within her community by being self-sufficient and having an income. Since her husband passed away, Susan has been supporting her children with her dressmaking. In her community hers was the first brick-built home. Clearly, Susan assumed a role assigned to men: as a protector, carer and breadwinner. This must not have been easy to the men around her, who might have needed to maintain the patriarchal ideal of male domination and female subjugation. As Kambarani (2006) informs us, African societies too reflect patriarchal ideology.

Susan was accused by a male neighbour for causing his illness. She said:

Translator: *…they coming from KwaZulu Natal and she came to Soweto…in 1992 she moved from Soweto to Orange Farm and she was happy with her neighbours…then they calling her a witch then all the people like here by next door the mother was getting sick and they were saying she is witching this women*

Yaseen: *okay so she got sick?*

Translator: *yeah and the father also*

Yaseen: *okay*

Translator: *when they (sick mother) passed away they say she bewitched them … they were talking about Susan she is a witch*

This case indicates that witchcraft may be utilised as a means to explain the experience of illness (Crawford, 1967; Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Levack, 1987). Since the accusation, Susan said her male neighbour has been constantly harassing her, and people have been afraid to come to her home. We interpret the accusation of witchcraft and harassment against Susan as feeding into the destruction of her relative power. Based on the fear of witchcraft, people would be

afraid to come to Susan's home, thus lessening her economic independence. The impact of fear of bewitchment and the consequences of being accused is captured with the excerpt below.

Translator: *he was telling the other community [members] and saying that Susan is a witch they must burn her*

Yaseen: *okay*

Translator: *because now the people doesn't greet Susan they doesn't come to Susan's house they say she is the witch she witch them*

The accusation of witchcraft against Susan therefore seems to have been an attempt to reduce her independence and placed her in a weakened financial position. We can state further that by reducing Susan's economic position through a witchcraft accusation, Susan was aligned to a gender role that was not considered powerful. As Susan's experience is interpreted by the translator, we gain further insight *"you see sometimes Susan is a strong woman she doesn't have a [husband] she is a widow"*.

In contexts where belief in witchcraft and witches hold sway, an accusation of "witch" is thrown at the powerful or threatening women as women are not meant to assume positions of power that go beyond mother, good wife or daughter.

With Susan, Annie and Sheila's experiences of the accusation of witchcraft, we observed that they all had power in some form. The power they held was not considered appropriate to their gender by their accusers, who were all male. Being accused of witchcraft all three participants firstly, lost the reputation and trust of the community. The community members therefore, were afraid of them and reduced their interaction with them. The businesses the accused ran suffered from this and ultimately this fed into the notion of a reduction of independence. The accusers themselves, we can assume, did not face any questioning for their accusations. In fact, the motives the accusers had are not acknowledged, but rather they are placed as victims to evil actions. We note from our literature survey, that in cases of violence against women, women are considered as the wrong-doers (Boonzaier, 2008; Boonzaier, Kiguwa & Shefer, 2006). This provides men, who are in most cases responsible for violence against women with a sense of power and control over women.

The following section reports findings of witchcraft accusations from women.

Accusations of witchcraft from women

The understanding of gender-based violence has evolved and extends beyond heterosexual relations. Much research provides evidence that female-to-female violence falls within the domain of gendered violence (Terry & Hoare, 2007). Mariam and Helen are two particpants who were accused of witchcraft by other females. In the literature, women too have been identified as levelling accusations of witchcraft against other women (Hansen, 1969; Heineman, 2000), but these instances were not as prominently portrayed. The major reason cited in the literature stem from jealousy, envy to interpersonal conflicts (Briggs, 2002). We must bear in mind that an association of women who accused other women of witchcraft with jealousy or envy is filled with gender stereotypes. Why is it that men have not been identified as projecting jealousy when an accusation is made? A more plausible understanding here, is that not only are men responsible for upholding a hegemonic status quo. Women too, who function from within the designated gender roles assigned to them, may find certain expressions of femininity as deviations from what is acceptable.

For example, studies employing feminist psychological principles reveal that violence against women is an expression of gender relation, which supports the subordination of women to masculine power and control (White & Kowlaski, 1996; Shefer, Boonzaier and Kiguwa, 2006). It has been suggested that the religious, legal, political, educational and material institutions both create and reinforce expectations about how men and women should behave (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1995; Holmes, 1995; Narayan *et al.,* 2000). These provide not only men, but women with indications of behaviour that are deemed acceptable. Women may themselves therefore, find it difficult to explain expressions of femininity that do not conform to the standards that have been prescribed by a patriarchal system.it follows that women who accuse other women of witchcraft, may be functioning from within a specific framework of femininity and; the embodied characteristics of the accused may represent an example of a threatening femininity.

Case 4: Mariam

Mariam is a mother of three and a housewife. She is 39 years old. She said that she was accused by her female neighbour of being a witch. The accusation took place after an incident one evening. Mariam's eldest child needed to use the bathroom, which is placed outside of the main living area in the shack. The time was between 21:30pm and 22:00pm. While waiting for her child, she heard music from her neighbour's radio and

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the song playing was one that she liked. Mariam danced to the song while she waited for her child. A few days later she heard from people in the area that her neighbours said that she is a witch because she was dancing around a small fire in her yard. Mariam also stated that during the time of the accusation, she bought new furniture for her bedroom.

Accused by her female neighbour, Mariam, a housewife, did not understand why she is considered a witch. (Show that she did not understand by quoting from the interview) She is not in a powerful position in that she does not have a career that may be the motivation behind the accusation. Interestingly, it is the accuser who occupies a position that may be deemed as relatively more powerful. Mariam describes the accuser thus: *"she's working"*.

Where patriarchal ideals dominate and influence the thoughts, perceptions and general behaviour of people some women might comfortably adopt the gender roles designated for them.

Finally, Mariam states *"...that time [time of accusation] I buy the bed the 3 suite that bedroom that is why that time that people he was... [accusing me of being a witch]"*. Thus, seeing Mariam's apparent living condition caused discomfort to her neighbour. Thus, a witchcraft accusation against her showcases her own hidden motives of jealousy and envy at both her gender role and her seeming happiness.

Case 5: Helen

Helen's experience is another example of a female to female witchcraft accusation.

> Helen is a 49-year-old married female. Helen is also a traditional healer who has been assisting people with a variety of health issues like the common flu. She also runs a small crèche in her community. Helen's home was neat and tidy and was larger than many of the informal homes in her community. She was accused by her female neighbour of being a witch. After the accusation, the neighbour and people from the community stood in front of her house and told her clients that they should be careful of Helen as she was a 'bad' person. Helen reported this to the police. As a reason for the accusation, she indicated that her neighbour was always hungry. A few years prior to the current accusation, Helen assumed the position of principal in a pre-primary school in her community that was sponsored by the government. She was accused by

some of the other teachers and parents of mixing muthi with the porridge to make the children sick. Subsequent to this accusation, she was removed from her position.

Helen indicates that women in her community don't work and that she is progressing financially, in terms of her career. *"I develop you know people most of the women they are not working"*. Helen appears to have been a threat as she assumed a role designated for men – the role of worker, protector and leader. Women are not meant to work for themselves and Helen threatened the prevailing gender power relations.

Being driven by her career, Helen inadvertently became the source of conflict for her neighbour: *"everybody they come here I put the bones down at night I buy mielie-meal [maize porridge] I buy bread for my children they haven't got the money"*

With her career as a traditional healer, Helen indicates to us that she was able to support and care for her family, while her neighbour had no source of income. Furthermore, Helen also assumed a position over other female workers at a crèche where she was manager.

Yaseen: *so they made you leave your job?*

Helen: *yes I want to explain this now you see their at that crèche I was also cooking the food I used to buy the food and cook it and now the other lady she come after me after 6 o'clock 7 o'clock she come this lady she comes in there*

Yaseen: *she was working for you?*

Helen: *yeah they say that I got the green muthi in my hand and that I put my hand in the pot and I stir the pot but that pot is err boiling ... and the children their stomach is getting sore*

The few women working under Helen claimed that she bewitched the children's food. This accusation and the accusation from her neighbour created a sense of fear within the community of Helen's supposed supernatural capabilities. This fear is part of a context where the belief in witchcraft is an explanatory framework for negative outcomes that no one would want to have themselves or their children exposed to. As a consequence of the accusation, her career as a traditional healer began to wane and she was fired from her position as manager of the pre-school. By removing a powerful female who threatens the gender order, a restoration of a gendered relation is obtained. To support this, Helen informs us:

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"my traditional [healing] is not working people never came...come again because people got many things to give out around this...yeah scared to come and I was and I'm crying you see now I'm not crying... but that time I was crying every day I can't eat and no food in my plate no food can believe?... I'm meaning nothing in my plate...".

Generally, the community would believe this accusation, as the belief in witchcraft exists and is feared (see Ally, in press). Additionally, Helen alludes to a common practice in African contexts where community is considered as the extended family. *"...if I'm hungry I must go to my neighbour if my neighbour say I got Tokoloshe* [mythical creature that can be used by witches to harm others] *it became difficult because people believe this because [she] is your blood [she] is your sister"*. Implicit to the information Helen provided, is the assumption that one would not question what neighbours have to conclude about you. Hence, if an accusation of witchcraft is suggested, it is likely to be believed. Helen informs us that the accusation against her is believable within her community as neighbours are considered in a relational sense and what they say about you must be true. Thus the actual reason behind the accusation is not considered.

Summary

The current study produced two threads to understanding witchcraft accusations. We firstly summarise what we expected, namely, that men accused women of witchcraft and the gender relation implication posed by these accusations. Secondly, we discuss the unanticipated finding of the study, that women accuse other women of witchcraft.

In general, the women in the study can be considered as powerful. Either through interaction with their partners, colleagues, as housewives, or through their careers, the power they assumed resulted in them being perceived as 'different'.

When men accuse women of witchcraft, we see that witchcraft accusations may serve the purpose of reproducing a particular gendered relation that functions ideologically in a way that favours men. It follows that women who are powerful, challenge the stereotyped conceptions of femininity – which is positioned as nurturing, soft and vulnerable. Accusing women of witchcraft, repositions women as vulnerable as well as insubordinate to men. We can state regarding witchcraft accusations in South Africa, is that a gender dynamic favouring men does exist. Men seem to be scantily reported as witches and as evidenced by the interviews with those accused of witchcraft, women are primarily the targets of witchcraft accusations. The

gender dynamic favouring men, finds expression in the way the participants were led toward accusation, either through their careers, their behaviour or their voices. The men who accused the participants of witchcraft can be said to be functioning in clearly demarcated gender roles, as we all are. These gender roles stipulate typical behaviour that is associated with men and women and when one transgresses these behaviours, the person becomes questionable. The questioning of the person displaying unacceptable behaviour needs to be labelled so that the behaviour which doesn't fit patriarchal norms can be understood. In contexts, like those within which the participants reside in, witchcraft beliefs abound. Witchcraft is drawn upon in times of doubt, disease, and misfortune. In fact, any experience out of the ordinary may be linked to the work of witches. Therefore any person, whose behaviour does not meet social standards, may stand the risk of being accused of witchcraft, in contexts where the belief in witchcraft exists. This feeds into the idea that patriarchal ideals frame our lives. Patriarchy essentially favours men over women and we can thus state that witchcraft accusations too, which affect the lives of more women than men supports the notion of male dominance.

When women accuse women of witchcraft, the interpretation may not be steeped in gender power. Rather, the explanation for the accusations may be steeped in interpersonal conflict and quarrels. Jealousy and envy at the success of other women may be the motivating factor why some women accuse other women of the craft. The implication posed by this unanticipated finding, that women may accuse other women, challenges our theoretical perspective, which assumed that gender power was the primary motivating factor behind all accusations of witchcraft. The realisation gained, is that a gender power steeped in patriarchal ideals may be an explanatory framework when discussing accusations of witchcraft from men to women. However, when women accuse other women, we gained insight through data suggesting that jealousy and envy may be the primary motivating factor.

Regardless of who accuses women of witchcraft, once an accusation has been levelled, a woman loses all honour, respect and power (career and otherwise). She is thus rendered not-so-powerful in relation to men. Witchcraft is believed as an 'evil', harmful entity and thus anyone associated with the craft, would be feared and consequently avoided, harmed, ignored. By labelling these women as witches, it is ensured that the gender threat they pose to the men and women within their lives is dealt with. The accused women had no choice but to surrender to a gendered relation wherein men are powerful and women are subjugated to that power.

In this study, we observed how a particular gender relation that favours men was reproduced. With the participants of this study, their power was removed by the accusations in the following ways:

Helen: Her traditional healing practice is not doing well. People are afraid to come to her. She was also removed from her position as manager of the crèche. Ultimately, the accusation reduced her to a position of no money or source of income.

Annie: Annie did not experience any real consequences to the accusation. The accuser removed himself from the neighbourhood. Mariam: is happily married, but the accusation has left her in a position where people fear her.

Susan: Customers are afraid to come to her home. As such, her business as a dressmaker is not doing too well. She is also, faced with emotional abuse from the accusers and has had several physical attacks from other community members.

Sheila: The accusation has removed her from the care of the husband and thus rendered her 'powerless'. She has no contact with her family, including her grandchildren and is left to fend for herself.

Susan and Sheila were the participants who indicated that violence was inherent to the accusation. As an example, Sheila showed us various scars on her face, neck and back that were inflicted by her husband and son-in-law. It must be noted, that except for Sheila, the participants of the study did not face violence as is said to be typical of witchcraft accusations. The findings with regard to consequences of witchcraft accusations were anticipated as most of the literature informs us that witches face violent reactions from community members (Briggs, 2002; Bornman, van Eeden & Wentzel, 1998).

CONCLUSION

This paper explored witchcraft accusations against women in South Africa using a feminist psychological lens. We found that when men accuse women of witchcraft, feminist psychological theory may explain such accusations, indicating that men may draw on available ideological repertoires, which essentially favour them, to justify their accusations of witchcraft and restore their power over women. Accusations of witchcraft from women indicated that the

primary source of the accusation was jealousy and envy. We conclude this paper with an acknowledgment that witchcraft accusations affect the lives of many women. On the one level, witchcraft accusations serve the function of restoring a gendered relation whereby men are considered powerful. On the other level, jealousy, envy and rivalry at the success of some women may result in accusations of witchcraft. The ultimate consequence of the accusation is fear of the accused, which can result in violent consequences.

We therefore conclude this paper, with an acknowledgement that witchcraft accusations affect the lives of many women and that these accusations are steeped in a tradition that supports the notion of male dominance over the female. Essentially witchcraft accusations serve the functioning of restoring a gendered relation whereby men are considered powerful.

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CHAPTER 5:

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Overview

Although violence against women is a phenomenon affecting the lives of women worldwide (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Dahlberg & Butchart, 2005), we acknowledge that research on intimate partner violence and rape seems to dominate our understanding of the phenomenon (Crawford & Unger, 1997). It follows that in order to effectively intervene and address violence against women, which seems to be escalating, an understanding of the various manifestations that it assumes in various contexts is essential.

With this need in mind, we directly honed in on a specific manifestation of violence affecting the lives of many women in South Africa. This PhD project located violence against women, specifically expressed through witchcraft accusations in some South African communities. Witchcraft accusations and the violent consequences faced by those accused cannot be further ignored in light of the urgent need to address, curb and ultimately end the violence women face.

Implicit to the focus of this PhD project, is that witchcraft-related violence is not receiving necessary attention but rather falls within the domain of the spectacular, unbelievable and fantastical realms, further denoting witchcraft as 'something' undefinable, inexplicable and to be feared.

The belief in witchcraft has long been of interest to social scientists and despite the array of explanations provided (Briggs, 2002; Levack, 1995; Federici, 1988; Hole, 1940), the full depth of the glaring gendered dimension has been side-lined (Barstow, 1994). With this in mind, we applied feminist psychological principles related to violence against women to understanding

witchcraft accusations and its associated violent reactions in South Africa, given that majority of the accused in both contemporary and historical accounts declare that women are more so the victims than men (Hester, 1992). Essentially, feminist psychological theory indicates that violence against women represents attempts from men to hold on to specific hegemonic discourses, stemming from patriarchal ideals. The positioning of women as vulnerable or dependent on men is argued thus, as a major contributing factor to the violence faced by women. From within this theoretical framework then, we argued that violence against women represented a complex scenario reflecting the overarching need to (re) establish particular gendered relations, which favour men.

In researching violence generally, one cannot exclude from the analysis an acknowledgement of the ecological approach. Steeped in a strong public health tradition, the ecological model proposes that violence can be experienced on different levels (Krug et al., 2002).
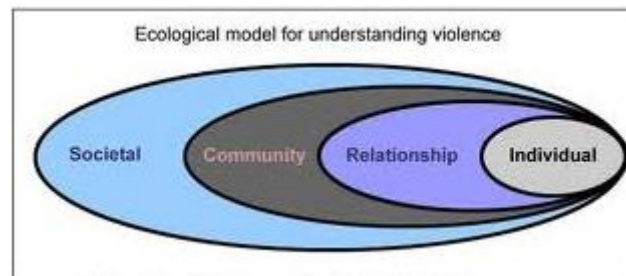
Model 1: Ecological Model for Understanding Violence

While some studies focus attention on individual factors, like the relationship between the victim and perpetrators; other studies acknowledge different levels of expression, like the community or societal level (Heise et al., 1999). Together, these different structures feed into certain notions of violence and paint our opinions of people, communities, societies and nations. It is from within these parameters that the PhD was structured. Each chapter addressed a specific expression of violence, identifying gender discourses within each level.

Together, the four chapters of the PhD by virtue of their focus draw attention to the expression of witchcraft-related violence on different structural levels. Beginning with a feminist psychological argument for witchcraft accusations in chapter 2, we progress towards gendered discourses in the reporting of witchcraft-related violence; honing in on the influence of witchcraft beliefs on community perceptions; and finally locating witchcraft accusations as a reflection of a gendered relationship, steeped in patriarchal ideology.

This chapter summarises the findings of this project. The following section presents the conclusions drawn from each chapter. The overall conclusion follows thereafter.

MANUSCRIPT CONCLUSIONS

The Four Manuscripts

The structure of this PhD is unique in that it extends upon the notion of singularity associated with doctoral projects and demonstrated how four, separate, yet inter-related manuscripts can contribute to a deeper understanding of any investigation. The nuanced challenge of such an investigation is the capacity to conclude each manuscript for what it represented but at the same time is cognisant of the overarching discourses they holistically represent. Below, we re-present the conclusions of each manuscript, based on the data collected, evidence evaluated and analyses conducted. Thereafter, an overall conclusion follows.

Witchcraft Accusations in South Africa as a Feminist Psychological Issue

This paper applied feminist psychological findings on gender based violence to understand witchcraft accusations and its associated violent consequences. The paper demonstrated that witchcraft accusations and witch hunts represent a gendered relation that is influenced by ideology (patriarchy) and the socio-cultural context. In societies where woman assume positions typically assigned for men, or function 'outside' the frame of patriarchy, they find themselves labelled and treated in particular ways; so too do women who are accused of being witches.

News Portrayals of Witchcraft Related Violence in South African Print Media: A Feminist Psychological Exploration

Exploring the reporting of witchcraft related violence in South African news reports was the focus of this manuscript. It was established that these reports promote gender stereotypes and associations about women – evil – witchcraft. By negating the violence faced by those accused of witchcraft and focusing on the justifications provided by the perpetrators of the acts, the

emphasis is removed from gender based violence intervention initiatives. This inevitably instils fear of the witch (women) and in so doing, posits violence as the solution.

An Exploration of Belief in Witchcraft in a Sample of Community Members: A Feminist Psychological Study

This paper located witchcraft beliefs and its violent consequences from within the reality of those who believe in it. We found that the image of women is located with witchcraft, making them susceptible to the Devil's deceit and essentially associated with evil. This gives rise to power dynamics between men and women, ultimately positioning women as needing guidance and protection from men. Patriarchal gender ideals seem to influence the perception and treatment of women, as evidenced through witchcraft-related violence.

A Feminist Psychological Exploration of Women Accused of Witchcraft in South Africa

In this paper, it was found that gender roles, built on patriarchal ideals, finds expression through religion and culture and gives rise to power dynamics between men and women. Women, who assume positions typically associated with men, may face accusations of witchcraft, from those who function in accordance to patriarchal gender roles. The aim of which, within contexts where the belief stirs fear, is a restoration of a powered gender relation which sublimates women to male power.

This section re-presented the conclusions within each chapter. The general conclusion that follows, discusses the broader implications thereof.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this PhD project, it was argued that witchcraft-related violence stems from within an interpersonal space defined by established gender roles. We argued that gendered relations steeped in patriarchal ideology, positions women as vulnerable and needy to men. Thus, when a female assumed a position interpreted as powerful, by those men and women who functioned from within the gender roles prescribed for them – an accusation of witchcraft ensured that the power assumed by the accused, is stopped.

We argued that in contexts where the belief in witchcraft is a reality and where witchcraft is feared because of its malevolent association with harm, destruction, illness and death – accusations of witchcraft will not be brushed aside. Instead, the accused will be viewed with suspicion and fear from family, neighbours and the general community at large, as word of her 'evil' spreads. We also positioned media reporting on witchcraft violence under the spotlight. The sensational focus on the mystical, fantastical and magical dimension of witchcraft perpetuates already negative and fear-filled notions of the belief.

Inherent to this argument, we honed in on the gendered dimension of witchcraft, which positions women, more so than men as the primary suspects and victims. We argued that women have been historically associated with witchcraft and that this association is built upon patriarchal ideologies that underpin most religions and cultures. The belief of women as susceptible to the Devils deceit is therefore steeped in a tradition that places women as weak and in need of the protection, nurture and care provided by men.

Thus, when a female assumes a position of power (be it economic, political or even socially), she threatens those acceptable notions of gendered relations. When this happens, the discomfort experienced by those men and women, who function from within these gendered boundaries, must (re) establish a gendered relation that favours men. Overall then, the four chapters of this

PhD project highlighted the influence of gendered relations on different levels of society. This essentially, reflects the larger ideologies regarding gender that continues to influence the beliefs, perceptions, attitude and treatment of women.

STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

- By virtue of its focus, this study highlights an under-represented, under-explored expression of violence against women. The need to bring to the fore, more explicitly, this expression, is essential in light of the escalating numbers of those accused and victimized through witchcraft accusations.

- The focus on gendered relations, which seems to be lacking in the broader literature enables us to address a gap, not only within national literature, but international understandings as well.

- The findings of this project can also be broadly reconstructed and applied to understand other expressions of violence against women, experienced in various contexts, regions and countries in Africa specifically.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study did not localise witchcraft beliefs, within specific provinces. Although it was not the focus of the study, as the aim was to highlight the gendered relations that underpin witchcraft accusations; province located research studies may enable deeper nuances of an already complicated belief.

- Due to the sensitivity of the study, information from those individuals who accused women of witchcraft was not obtainable. I am uncertain if this will be achievable, given the possible legal implications posed to the accuser; as well as the ethical dilemma faced by the researcher, who will be juxtaposed between reporting a murderer and protecting the privacy of his/her participant.

- The women accused of witchcraft, who participated in the study are still left vulnerable to potential violent encounters. Although recommendations to seek protection in shelters and with the police were made, no specific, successful intervention addressing the issue and protecting those accused is in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

My engagement with supernatural beliefs and the behavioural implications they pose has become a deeply felt passion. I cannot imagine my life without the continued investigation of such phenomenon. Specifically, I recommend, both within the confines of my own commitment to such research, but to other interested researchers, that:

- Collaboration and networking with NGO's and other interested stakeholders to effectively pave the way towards interventions, to address witchcraft-related violence.

- Advocacy and education linked to fostering awareness of gender rights and equality is imperative.

- Those interested in investigating violence against women must include gendered relations into their equations, assumptions and hypothesis. It is argued that gendered relations must be a focus of these explorations, given that they are inherently positioned by patriarchal ideals – common in most religions and cultures.

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Appendix A:

QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE

The questions were structured to elicit further discussion around witchcraft. Further probing and questions were asked for matters of clarification, understanding and depth.

1. Introduction of researcher and the research project
2. Discussion around ethics and rights of the participant

Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Tell me about the accusation:
   - What happened?
   - Who accused you? What the accuser a male or female?
   - Do you know the accuser? How many were there?
   - What were you accused of?
   - When did the accusation occur?
   - Why do you think you were accused of witchcraft?
3. What is witchcraft?
4. What does witchcraft cause?
5. Who is a witch?
6. What does a witch look like?
7. What can a witch do?